Until Death do us Part

9

Story:
Hiroshi Takashige

Art:
DOUBLE-S

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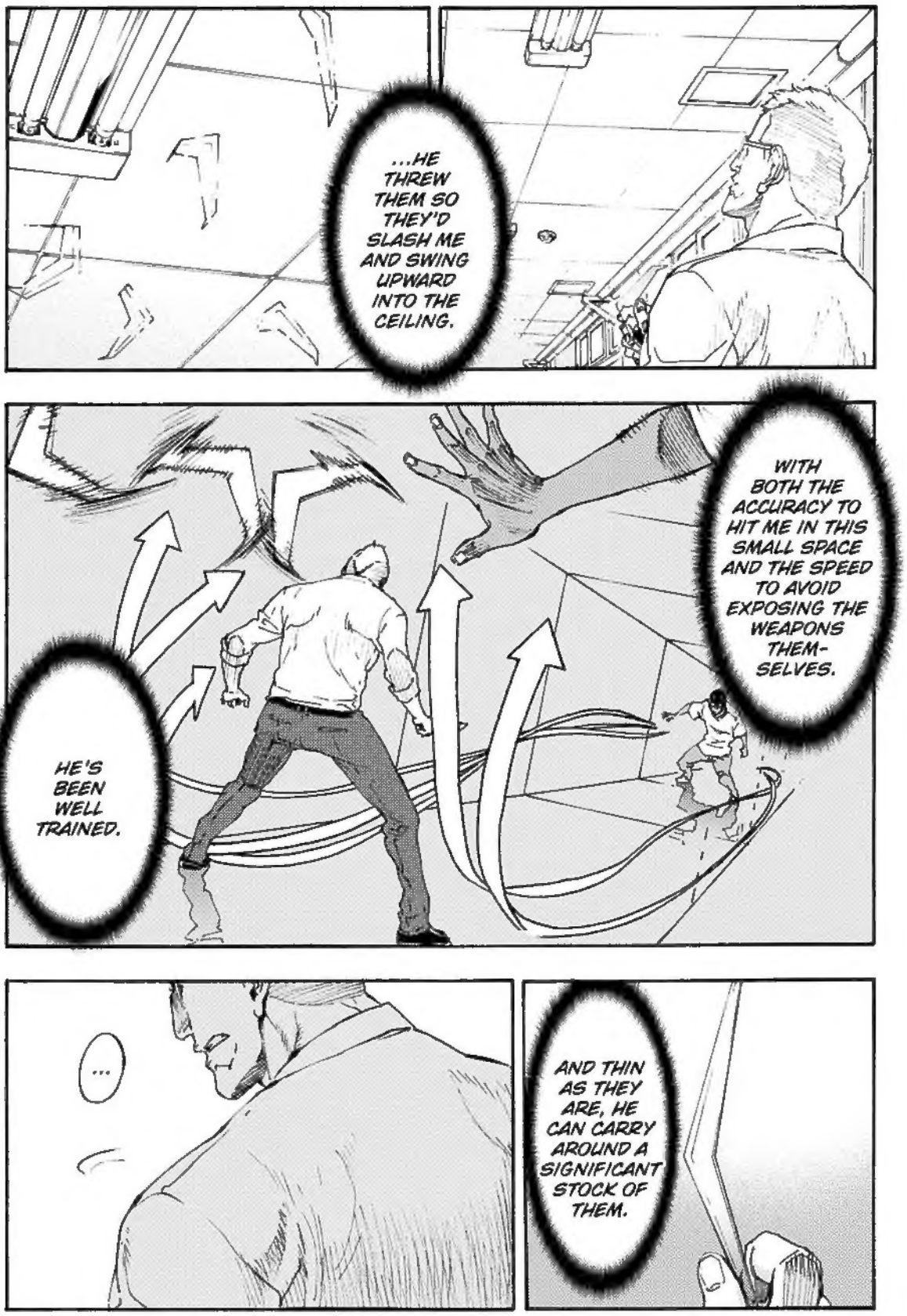
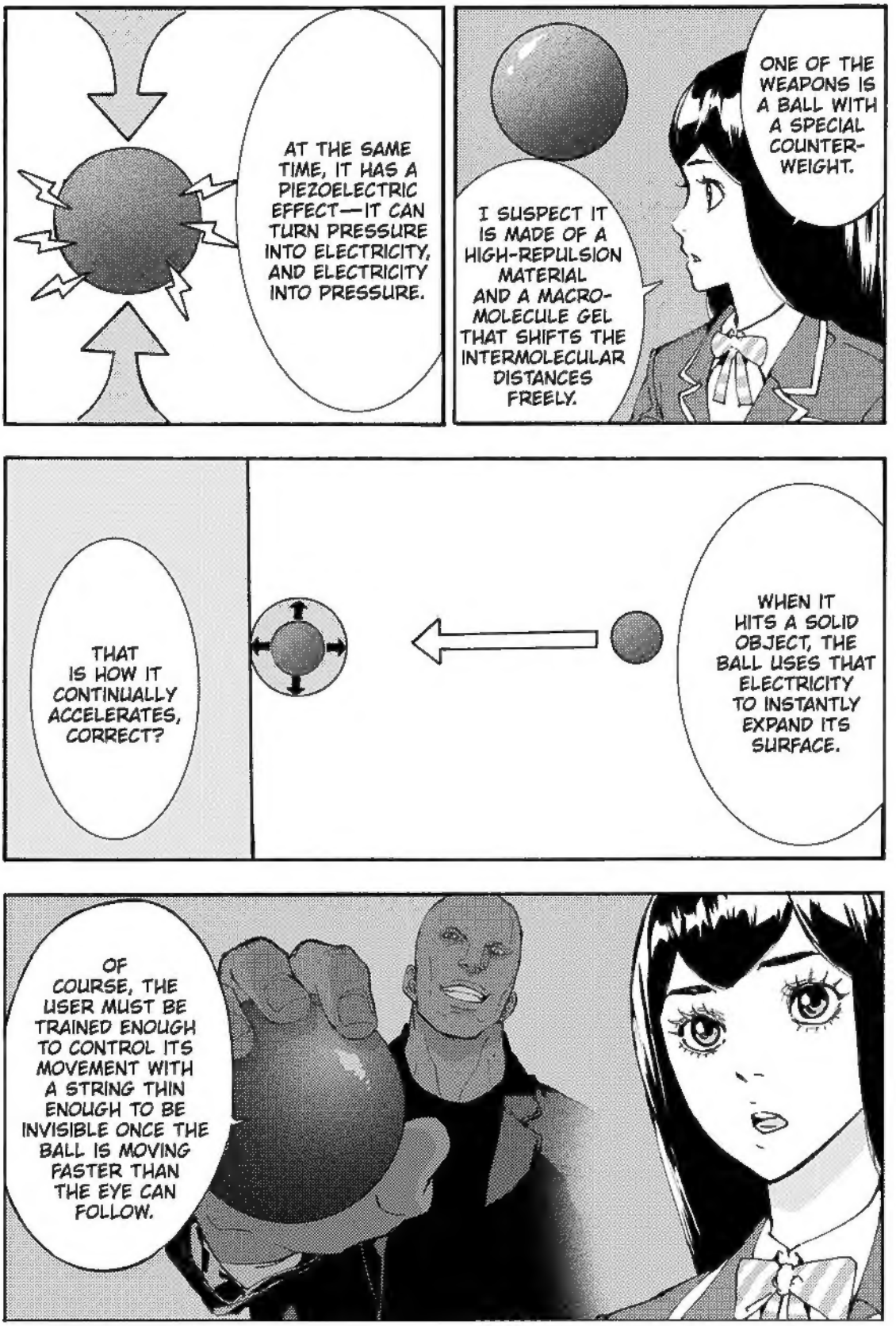
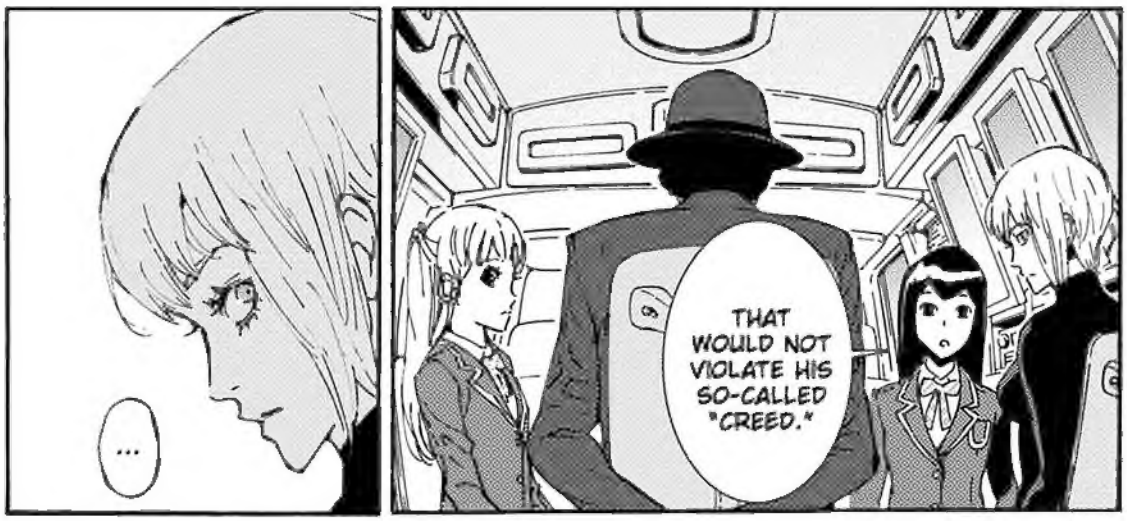
KI
(YANIK)
...I
SEE...


...HE THREW THEM SO THEY'D SLASH ME AND SWING UPWARD INTO THE CEILING.
WITH BOTH THE ACCURACY TO HIT ME IN THIS SMALL SPACE AND THE SPEED TO AVOID EXPOSING THE WEAPONS THEM-SELVES.
HE'S BEEN WELL TRAINED.
...
AND THIN AS THEY ARE, HE CAN CARRY AROUND A SIGNIFICANT STOCK OF THEM.

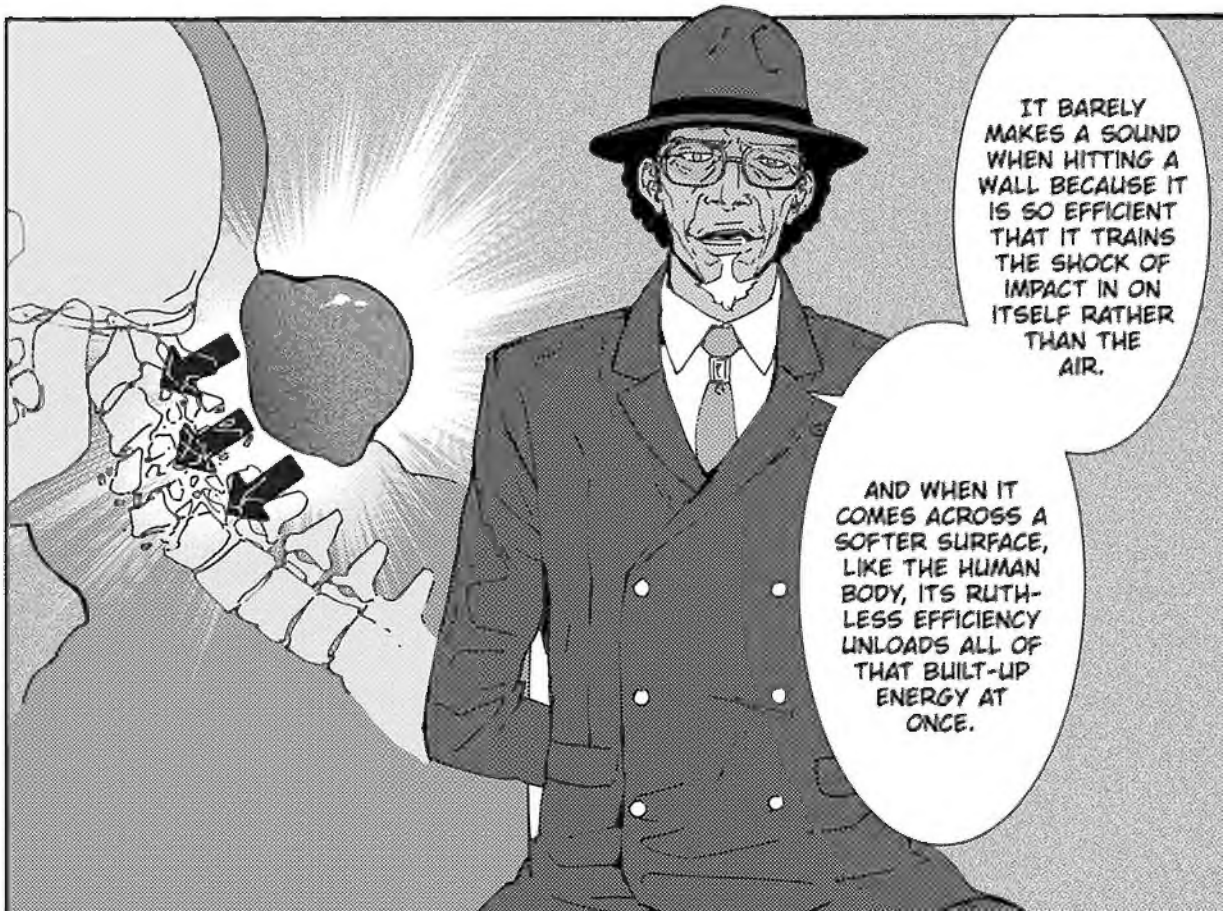
chapter 131

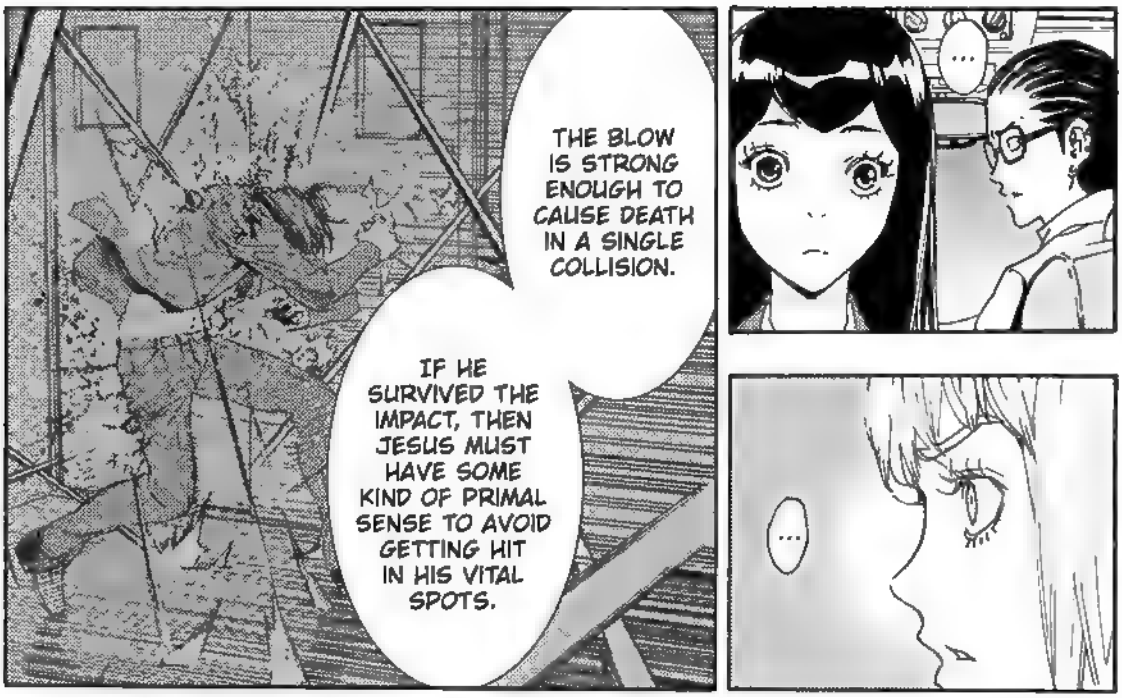
IS THIS IT?
WE GET THE BOOMERANG NOW.
BUT IF WE'RE GOING TO FIGHT THEM, WE NEED TO KNOW ABOUT ALL OF THEIR WEAPONS.
WITHOUT A DOUBT.
DO YOU MIND IF I EXPLAIN MY HYPOTHESIS, AS I UNDERSTAND THE FACTS NOW?
BY ALL MEANS, GO AHEAD.


AT THE SAME TIME, IT HAS A PIEZOELECTRIC EFFECT—IT CAN TURN PRESSURE INTO ELECTRICITY, AND ELECTRICITY INTO PRESSURE.
ONE OF THE WEAPONS IS A BALL WITH A SPECIAL COUNTER-WEIGHT.
I SUSPECT IT IS MADE OF A HIGH-REPULSION MATERIAL AND A MACRO-MOLECULE GEL THAT SHIFTS THE INTERMOLECULAR DISTANCES FREELY.
WHEN IT HITS A SOLID OBJECT, THE BALL USES THAT ELECTRICITY TO INSTANTLY EXPAND ITS SURFACE.
THAT IS HOW IT CONTINUALLY ACCELERATES, CORRECT?
OF COURSE, THE USER MUST BE TRAINED ENOUGH TO CONTROL ITS MOVEMENT WITH A STRING THIN ENOUGH TO BE INVISIBLE ONCE THE BALL IS MOVING FASTER THAN THE EYE CAN FOLLOW.


...
THAT WOULD NOT VIOLATE HIS SO-CALLED "CREED."

YES...


IT BARELY MAKES A SOUND WHEN HITTING A WALL BECAUSE IT IS SO EFFICIENT THAT IT TRAINS THE SHOCK OF IMPACT IN ON ITSELF RATHER THAN THE AIR.
AND WHEN IT COMES ACROSS A SOFTER SURFACE, LIKE THE HUMAN BODY, ITS RUTHLESS EFFICIENCY UNLOADS ALL OF THAT BUILT-UP ENERGY AT ONCE.


THE BLOW IS STRONG ENOUGH TO CAUSE DEATH IN A SINGLE COLLISION.
IF HE SURVIVED THE IMPACT, THEN JESUS MUST HAVE SOME KIND OF PRIMAL SENSE TO AVOID GETTING HIT IN HIS VITAL SPOTS.
...
...

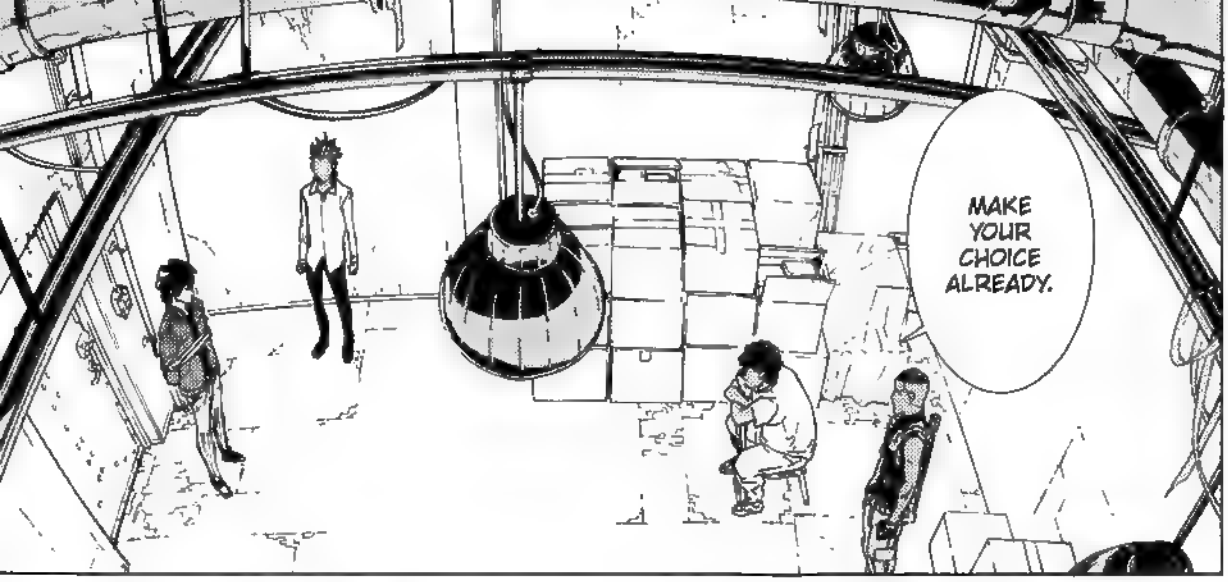
...ZELM... SAN...?
...

THEY'RE TOO WELL DISCIPLINED TO LOSE JUST BECAUSE SOMEONE ELSE KNOWS HOW THEIR TOOLS WORK.
WHAT DID I TELL YOU?

THAT IS CALLED META-MATERIAL.
THE INVISIBLE MAN!
NEXT.
IT'S ALWAYS BEEN POSSIBLE ON A THEORETICAL LEVEL. I JUST NEVER EXPECTED TO COME ACROSS IT IN REAL LIFE.
IT REFLECTS LIGHT IN NORMALLY UNNATURAL WAYS TO AVOID EXPOSING THE WEARER, KEEPING HIM INVISIBLE TO HUMAN EYES.
WHAT IS IT?
...
BUT IN THAT CASE, THERE IS ONE CLEAR FLAW THAT I CAN IDENTIFY.

WE CAN MAKE UP MUCH OF THAT HANDICAP IF WE UNDER-STAND THEIR TRICKS.
GACHA (CLICK)
ガチャ
YOU SUPPORT ASHFORD-SAN, AND I'LL HELP IGAWA-SAN CHECK HIS SYSTEMS.
I HATE TO BOTHER YOU DURING A BUSY TIME, BUT...

...I THINK IT'S TIME I TOOK MY LEAVE.
カシャン
KASHA (CLANK)
HOW? HOW DIDN'T I SEE IT!?
HUH?
!?


MAKE YOUR CHOICE ALREADY.

HEH HEH.
NO OPTION TO BUY TIME?

SPIT OUT YOUR SECRET, OR DIE.

...

TURUS DIDN'T REVEAL HARUKA'S SECRET, EVEN WHEN HE PUT A BOUNTY ON HER. I FIGURED HE WOULDN'T HAND OVER HER DETAILS TO THOSE IN POWER.
BUT IT'S GOOD TO KNOW THAT.

...
HEH-HEH-HEH. YOU GONNA LET TURUS LEAD YOU AROUND WITHOUT EVEN KNOWING THE POINT?
ULTIMATELY, YOU'RE GONNA LET HIM SEIZE CONTROL BACK HOME.
IS THE GIRL'S SECRET WORTH THAT MUCH?
JUST AS I EXPECTED.
TURUS ONLY TOLD THE TRUTH TO THE BARE MINIMUM OF PEOPLE NECESSARY!
ALL RIGHT... I'LL BITE. SO THIS IS THE ACE YOU AND MY BROTHER HAVE UP YOUR SLEEVES.
THAT'S RIGHT.

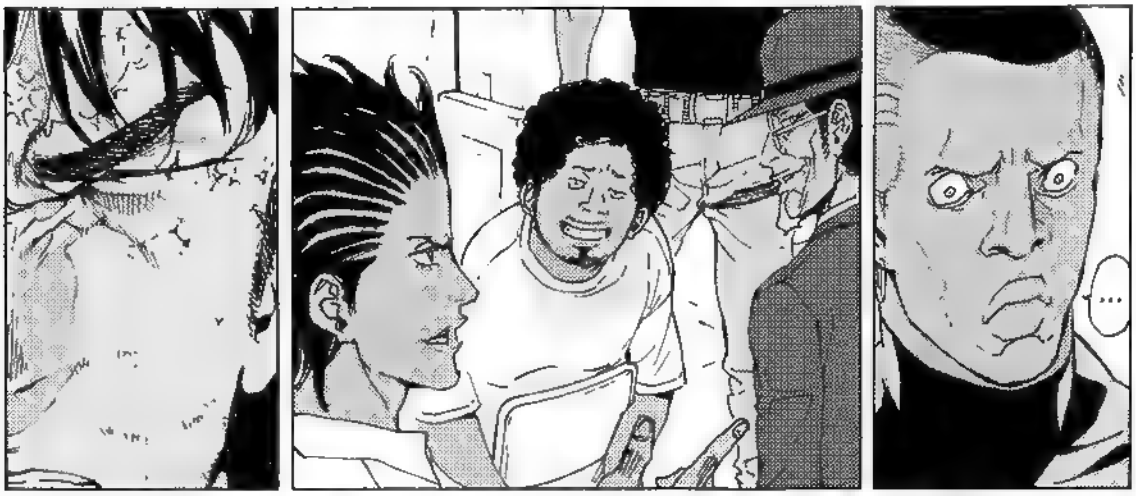
NOW, I JUST NEED TO FIGURE OUT HOW TO ESCAPE THIS JAM...

...
WE HAVE WAYS OF MAKING YOU SPEAK, IF NECESSARY.
ZUIK (ZMMF)
WHAT'S THE PLAN, HUH?

JUST A MOMENT.
!?

WHO'S THAT!?
I CAN TELL HE'S A TRUE ELITE.
AHH...
...
I REQUEST THAT YOU ALLOW ME TO HANDLE HIM.
GENIE.

WHY DO YOU SAY THAT? GOT SOMETHIN' NEAT IN MIND?


...

WHY WOULD YOU DO SOME-THING SO CONVO-LUTED!?

YOU WILL OBEY, WHETHER YOU LIKE IT OR NOT.
AND DO YOU REALLY THINK YOU CAN FORCE ME TO PLAY ALONG WITH YOUR SCHEME!?
KACHA (CLICK)
カチャ
...

...MAMORU-SAN!?
WHA—!?

GIRL (GRIN)
ぎり
...YOU SON OF A BITCH ...
WHAT NOW?
WE TOOK THESE TWO AND LET THE OTHERS GO.
SO I HAVE TO FIGHT MY WAY FREE OF THIS PLACE ALL ON MY OWN, THEN!?
THAT WILL DO.

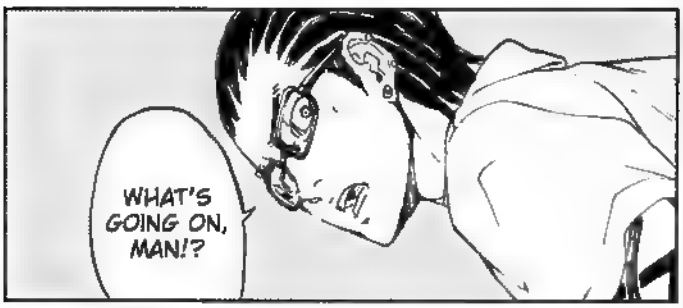
YOUR CAR'S WAITING OUTSIDE. GO AND GET YOUR BELOVED WEAPON.
PASA (PLUMP)
HYUN (SWISH)

Until
Death
do us
Part

IGAWA?
STAY AWAY!
THE INVISIBLE MAN'S HERE!!
M-MAMO-RU!

NO HE'S NOT.
HUH!?

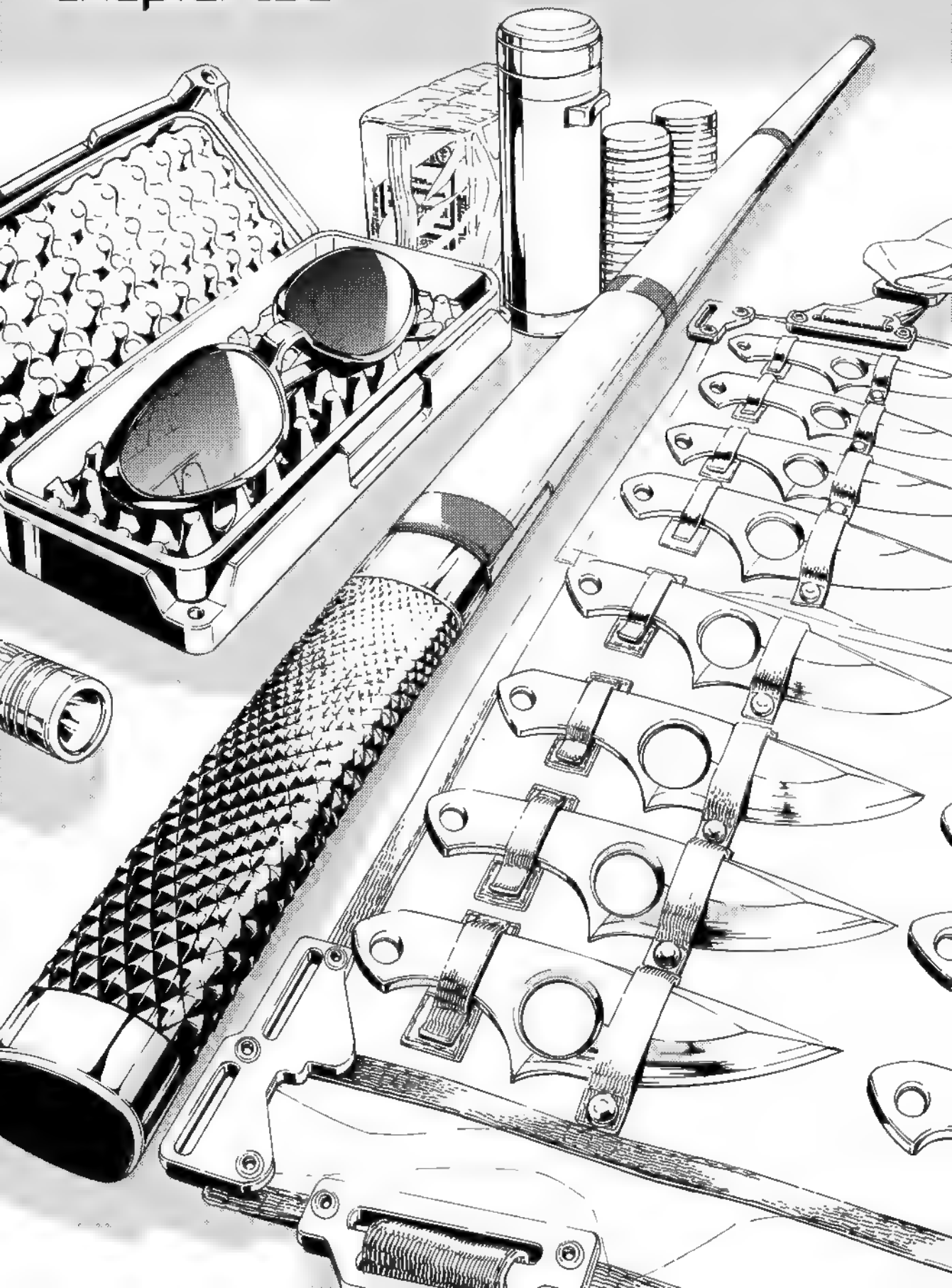
...
SUTA (TEK.)
スタ
SUTA
スタ
WHAT ARE YOU —!?


WHAT'S GOING ON, MAN!?

NOW GET MY BACKUP SUN-GLASSES AND CANE. WE DON'T HAVE TIME TO WASTE.

I CAN EXPLAIN ONCE I'M READY FOR BATTLE.

chapter 132



WE'LL GIVE YOU FIFTEEN MINUTES.

IF YOU CAN DEFEAT EVERYONE IN THIS ABANDONED FACTORY BUILDING WITHIN, LET'S SAY, THREE HOURS...THE HOSTAGES WILL BE RETURNED.
MAKE YOUR PREPARA-TIONS WISELY.

YOU WILL ACCEPT, AND YOU'LL PLAN A WAY TO ENSURE THAT WE COOPERATE.
ISN'T THAT WHO YOU ARE?
YOU EXPECT ME TO PLAY ALONG WHEN I HAVE NO ASSURANCES YOU'LL KEEP YOUR WORD?
...WHAT IS HE THINKING?
VERY WELL.
YOU'LL REGRET CUTTING ME LOOSE.

...BUT YOU KNOW THIS FALLS ON YOU IF IT FAILS, ZELM.
I AM WELL AWARE.
LOOK, I TRUST YOU AND ALL...
...
THEN I THINK IT'S TIME...
...TO SIT BACK AND ENJOY THE SHOW.
GATA (THUMP)
ガタッ

REMEMBER, YOU'RE MY BACKUP.
HEY!
ガチャ
GACHA (CLICK)
...

I figured someone else would come barging in swinging.

???

You threw off my game.

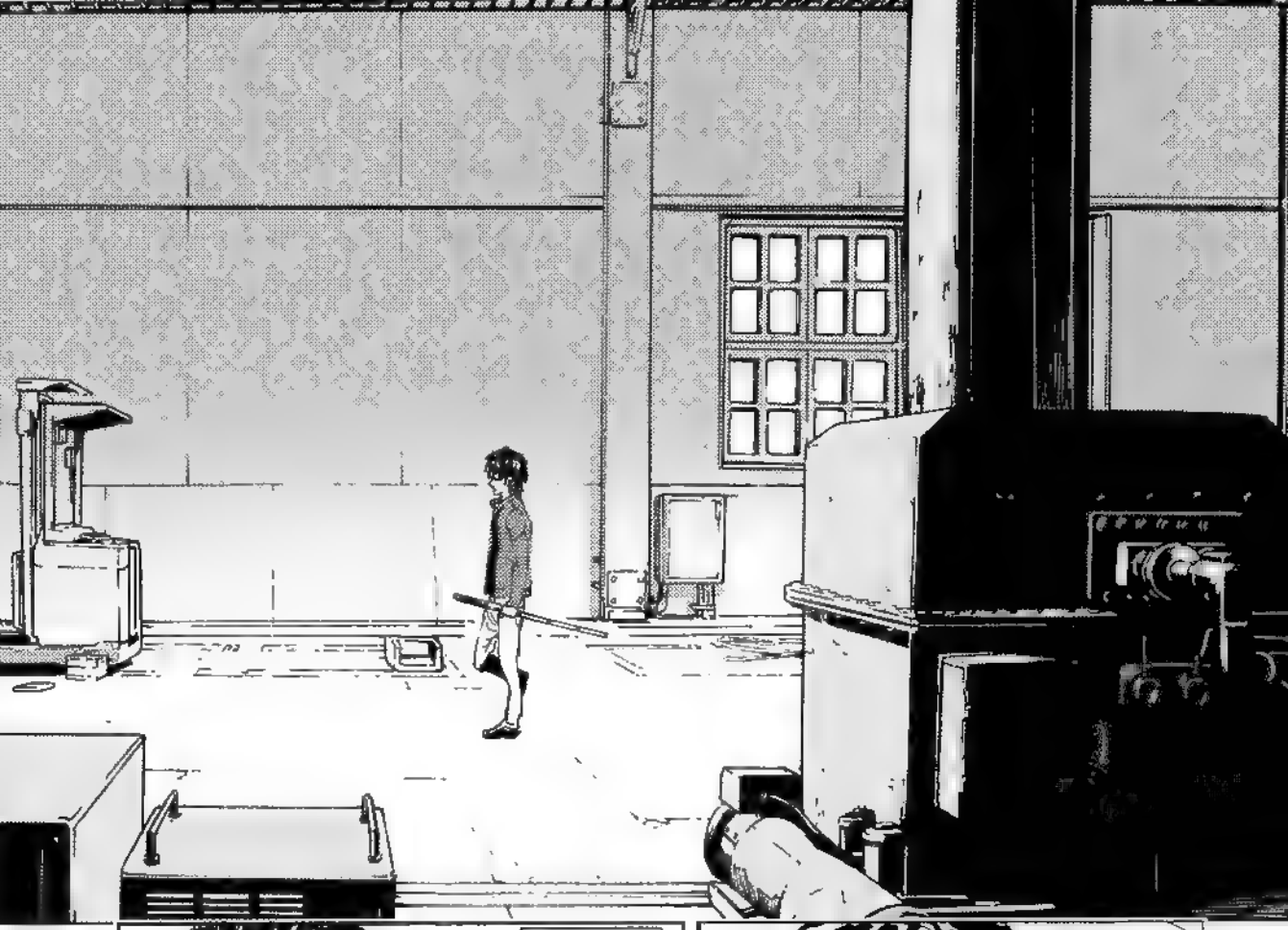
I DIDN'T EXPECT YOU GUYS TO COME HERE, DAMN IT...

JUST FOCUS ON SUPPORT.

What's that supposed to mean !?

THE ENEMY WE'RE FACING NOW IS TOUGHER THAN FANG.

Huh? Look, I get it, man!



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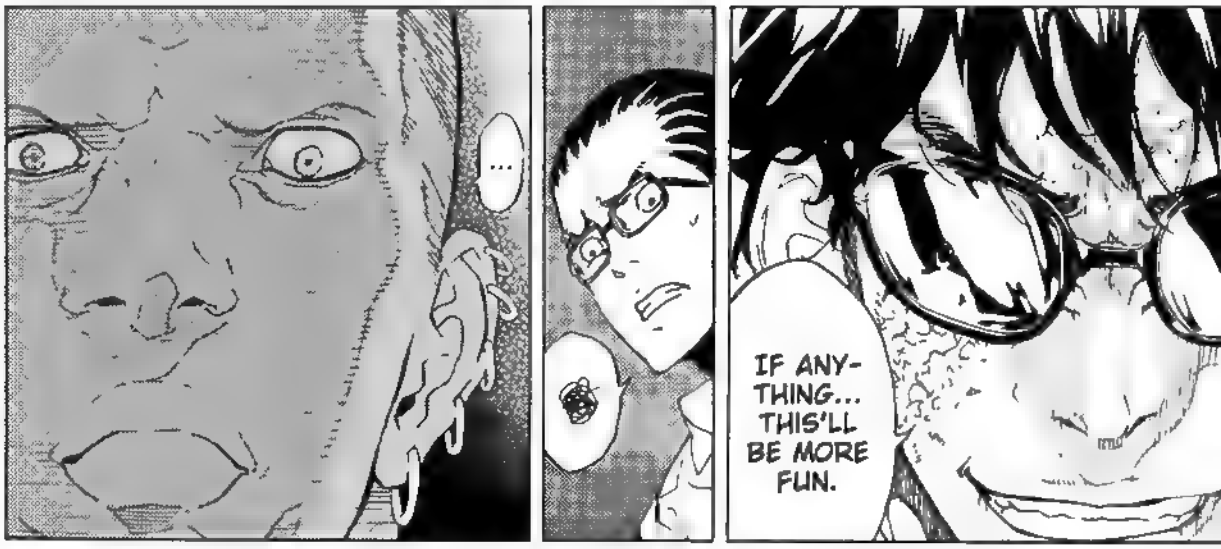
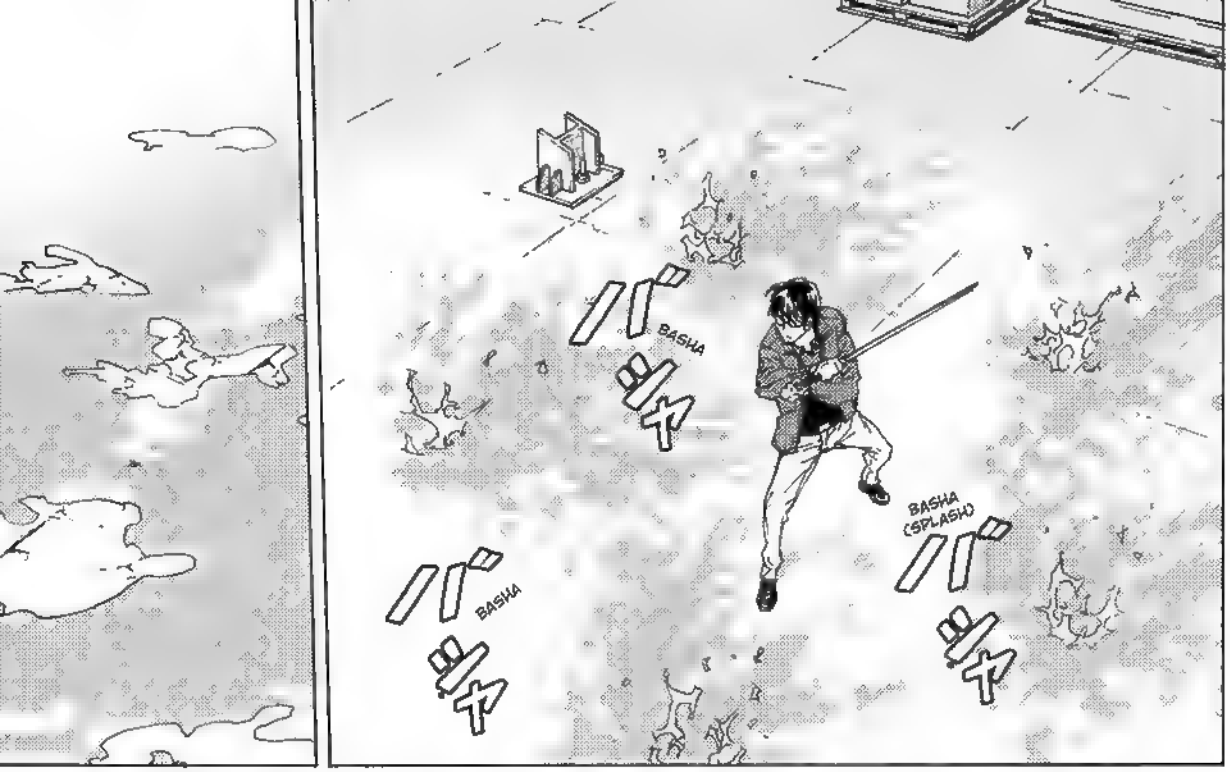
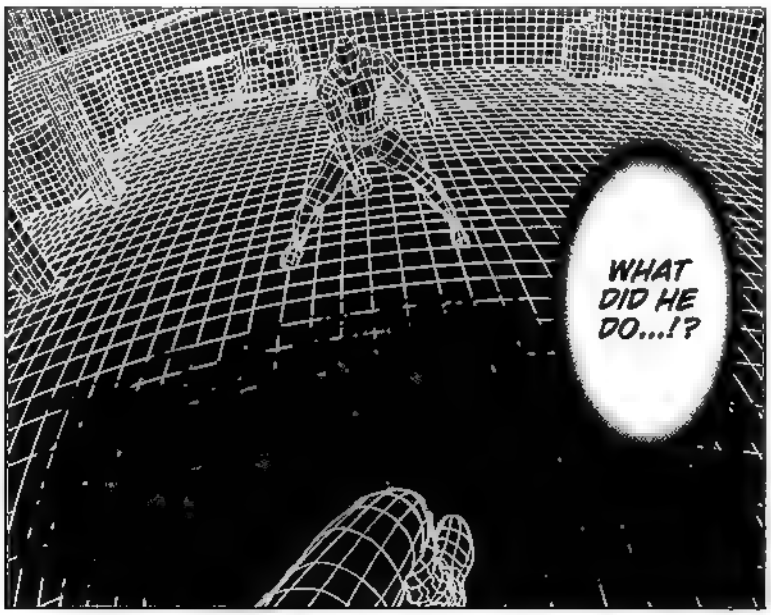

...
IF ANY-
THING...
THIS'LL
BE MORE
FUN.

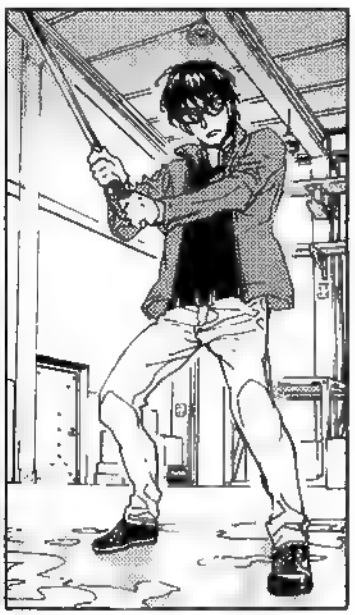
LET'S GET
STARTED...

...
HOW MUCH FUN YOU THINK WE'LL GET OUTTA HIM AGAINST GARA?

YOU THINK THE SAME MOVE WILL WORK TWICE!?
!?


バシャ
BASHA
バシャ
BASHA
バシャ
BASHA (SPLASH)


WHAT DID HE DO...!?



GOTCHA.

ダッ
DA
(DASH)
!?
ZURU
(SLIDE)
スルッ

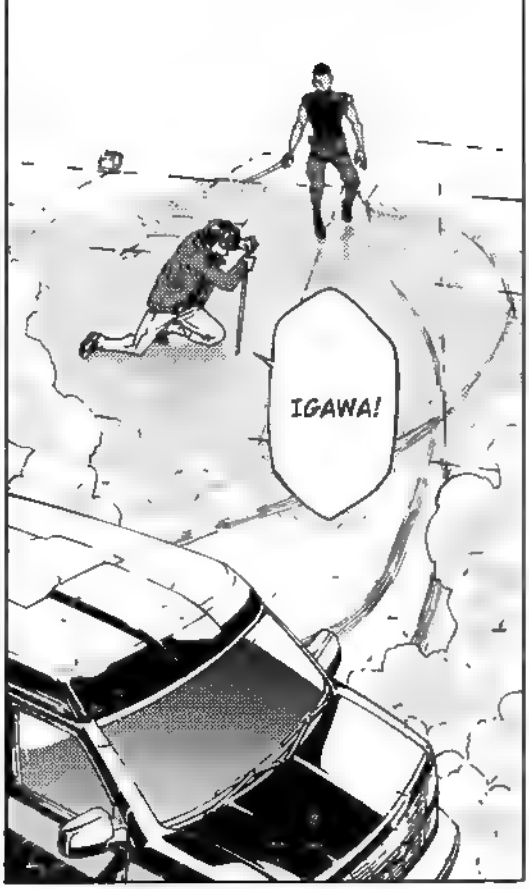
BUDDO (WHOOSH)
SOME KINDA LOW-FRICTION SUB-STANCE!
WHAT'S THIS...?
BUGGA (SMASH)

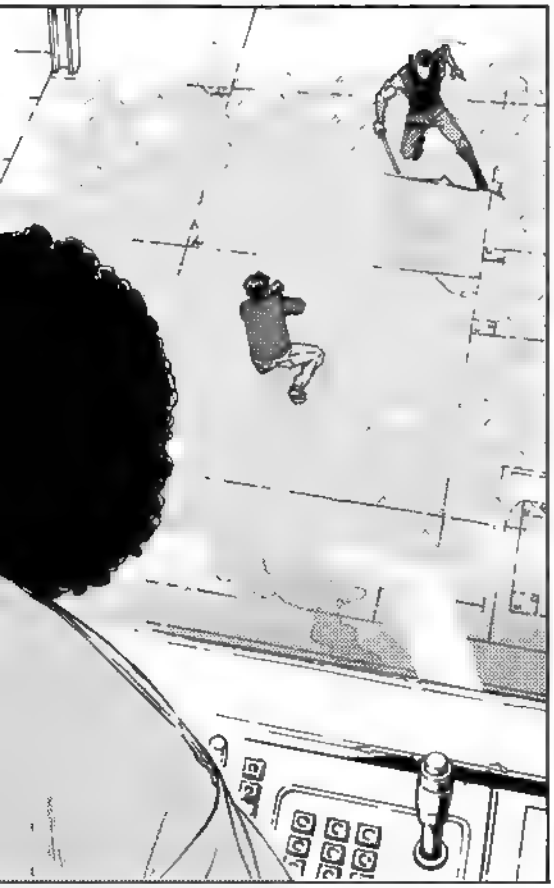
THEY'RE USING A MOBILITY DENIAL SYSTEM !?
WHAT !?
GOO (OHHH)
BUOOO (VROOM)
MAMORU!!
DOGA (THWAM)

YOU IDIOT!
STAY AWAY!!
BASHA SPLASH
HYU (ZIP)
HYU SHARP

キュ
KYURURU (SKREEE)
ル
ル
ル
SHIT! THE WHEEL AND BRAKES AREN'T WORKING !!
ドガ
DOGA (WHAMM)

UGH...


IGAWA!



IT'S A NON-LETHAL TOOL DEVELOPED TO RENDER VEHICLES USELESS.
I DIDN'T EXPECT HIS PARTNER TO BE SUCH AN AMATEUR.

THAT SHIT'S MORE SLIPPERY THAN ICE.
HERE WE GO.
GOT A FRICTION COEFFICIENT OF 0.005.
...
HOW YA GONNA FIGHT, SAMURAI?

chapter 133
UGH
SHAAA (SLIDE)

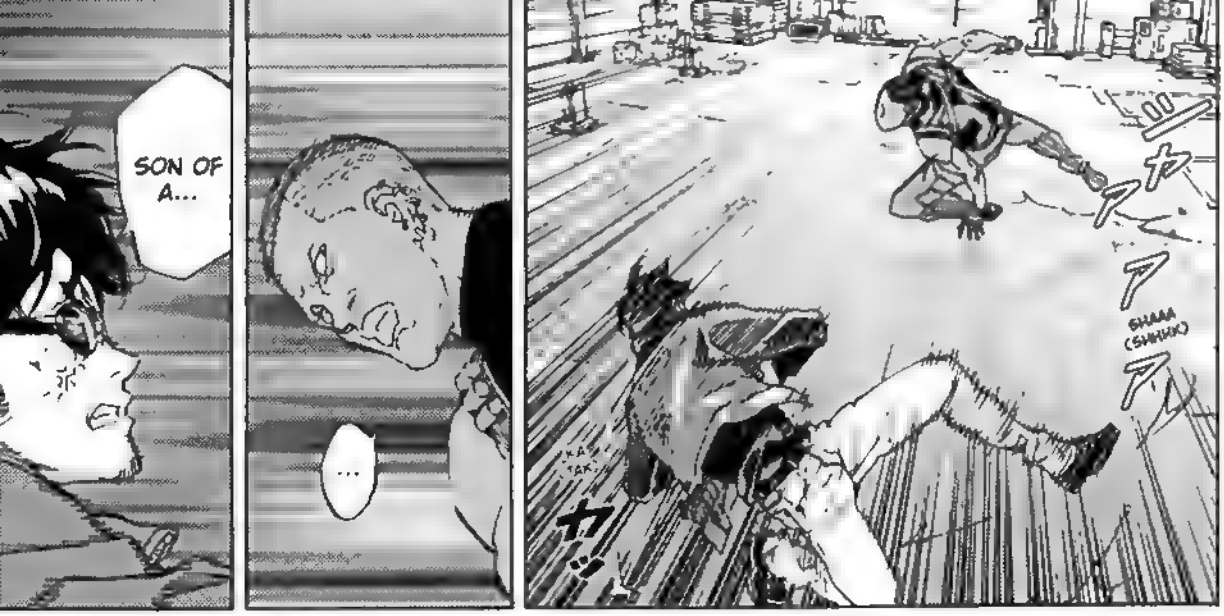
GARA USES HIS WEIGHT LIKE A SKATER, WHICH HELPS HIM GAIN EVEN HIGHER PROPULSION.
THE MDS MIGHT HAVE EXTREMELY LOW FRICTION, BUT IT'S NOT ZERO.
HE'S NEVER FAILED TO DEFEAT AN OPPONENT WITH THIS METHOD.
THIS MEANS OF ATTACK MAKES USE OF GARA'S INCREDIBLE BALANCE.
MMM ...
...OF COURSE.
LET'S SAVE THE SPEECHES FOR AFTER HE ACTUALLY WINS...

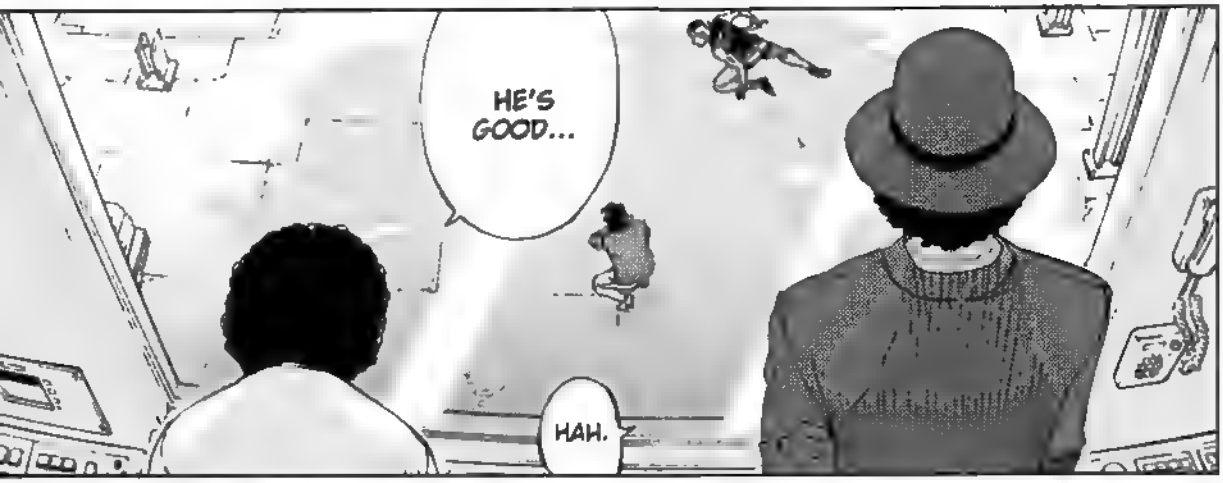
chapter 133

IF ANY OF THAT SHIT GETS ON MY HANDS, I WON'T BE ABLE TO HOLD A THING...
GOTTA AVOID THAT, IF POSSIBLE...
HYU (ZWD)
BUD (WHOOSH)

BA
(ZOOP)
!?

SHAAA (GLIDE)
KIKIKI (SCREE)
GUH—!!
BUSHU (BSHRT)


SON OF A...
...
KA-TAK
SHAAA (SWISH)


HE'S GOOD...
HAH.

HE CAN BARELY EVEN STAND UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES BUT HASN'T LOST AN OUNCE OF HIS WILL TO FIGHT.

...
NOW I SEE WHY THAT TOUGH-ASS OLDER BROTHER OF MINE GOT BEAT.
SHIT!
KIN (KTING)
ズル
SLURP SLURP

I CAN SENSE THEIR GAZE.
ENJOY YOUR LOFTY PERCH WHILE YOU CAN.
I GET IT NOW...
I BET THIS GUY COULD BEAT ALMOST ANYONE WITH THIS STRATEGY.
ZUGA CTHWAAO
SHAAA CSHHH

BUT I'M NOT GONNA BE ONE OF THEM!

SIMPLY STAND STRAIGHT UPON THE EARTH...
DON'T MAKE THE MISTAKE OF PLACING WEIGHT...
ズ!..
!?

...
OH!?
HRM!
IF HE FOCUSES ON NOTHING BUT STANDING, IT'S POSSIBLE.
IN THEORY, GRAVITY PULLS DOWN-WARD FROM THE BODY'S CENTER OF MASS.
BUT THAT'S NOT THE KIND OF THING THAT CAN BE PULLED OFF IN BATTLE.

...WHAT'S WRONG?
I THOUGHT YOU WERE PUTTING ON A SHOW FOR YOUR BOSS.
...
SHAAA (SHHK)
HYUN (SWISH)
JUST TRY TO SHAKE HIM.
DON'T RUSH IT...

HYUN (SWISH)
ヒュー
O
O

NOT THE SLICK STUFF THIS TIME, BUT THE STICKY FOAM!
THAT'S RIGHT!

O
WHAT NOW, SAMURAI !?

WHAT!?
WHAT HAP-PENED TO THE STICKY FOAM!?

BUAA
(SWOOSH)
HE SPLIT THE STICKY FOAM BEFORE IT COULD EVEN DEPLOY!?
HOW IS THAT POSSIBLE ...?
!?

BA
(ZOOM)
GAH!
HYU
(SWISH)

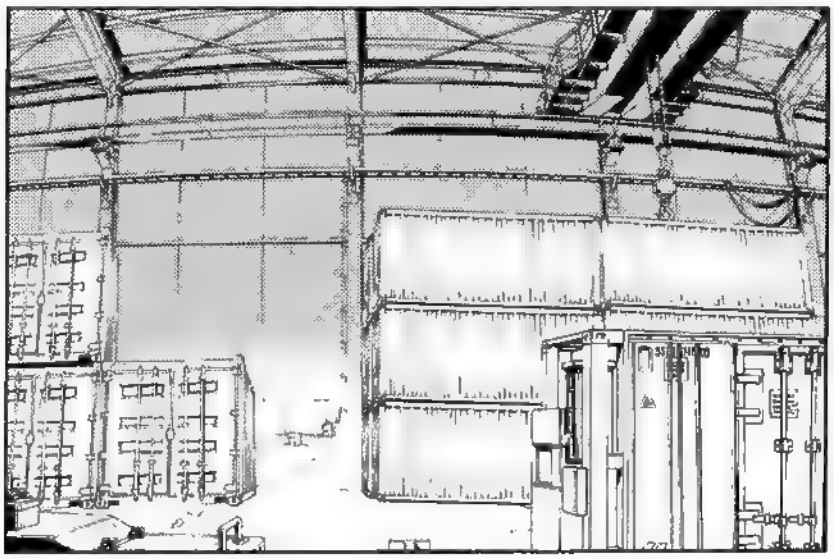
ドゥ
DO! (THUD)
!?
シャアアア
SHAAA (SHHK)

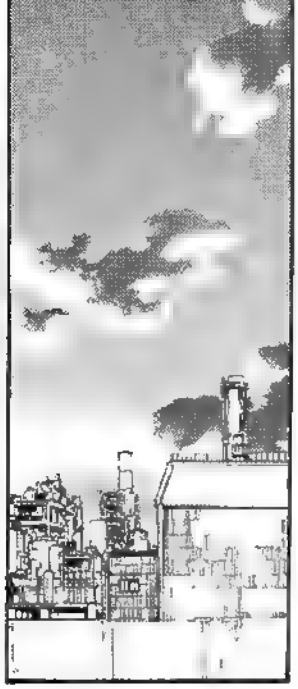
IF YOU DON'T BEAT THE OPPONENT BEFORE THEY GET USED TO YOUR CRAP, YOU LOSE.
KA (FLIP)
YOU TOOK TOO MUCH TIME.
!?
BAGI (KRUNCH)

DOSA (THUMP)
GAAH !!
YOU JUST GONNA STAND THERE AND WATCH!? I'LL TAKE YOU ON IF YOU WANT!!

DAMN, THIS GUY'S OFF THE HOOK!
WHAT DO YOU PLAN TO DO?
SHALL WE PUT ON A LITTLE MORE PRESSURE?
BUT YOU ALREADY KNOW THAT.

Until
Death
do us
Part



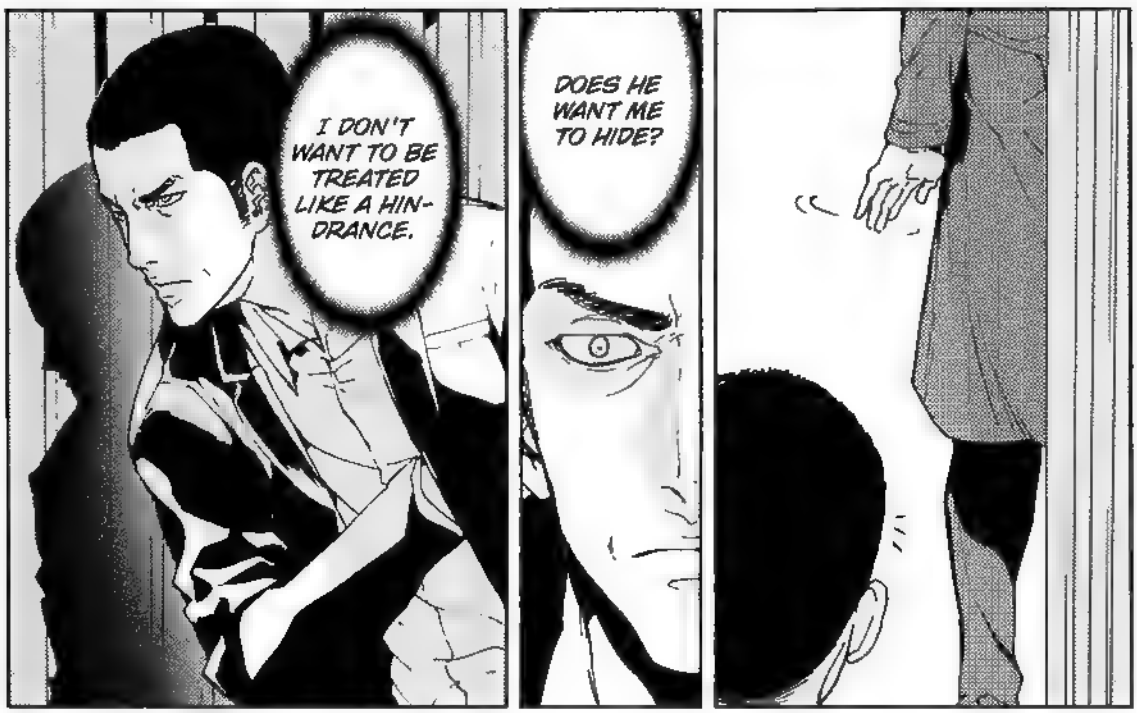


STRANGE ...
IT'S TOO QUIET...
WHAT IS IT!?
バッ
BA (WHOOSH)
!

chapter 134

I FIGURED I'D GET THE CHANCE TO SETTLE THINGS WITH THE SAMURAI, BUT INSTEAD I GET THIS JOKER.
GOOD GRIEF.

BUT WAIT...MAYBE THIS ONE'S ACTUALLY A REAL FIND.


I DON'T WANT TO BE TREATED LIKE A HIN-DRANCE.
DOES HE WANT ME TO HIDE?

BINGO...
WELL
THAT'S A VERY GOOD QUESTION
YOU'RE WITH THE BLACK UNIT?
WHAT ARE YOU PLAYING AT!?
YOU WANNA KNOW?
HOW ABOUT, "BEATING DOWN ANY-ONE WHO INFILTRATES OUR HIDE-OUT"?

...
BRASS KNUCK-LES... HE'S A BOXER.

TALL AND THIN WITH A TRENCH COAT?
SOUTH-PAW STYLE?

(GAIN-KTANG)

I KNEW IT! YOU ARE TATE THE AEGIS!
...
A METAL ARM!?
WE GOT ONE HELL OF A SUR-PRISE GUEST!

HE'S DANGEROUS TOO...
DA (DASH)
I WASN'T EXPECTING THIS...
...BUT IF YOU'RE MORE FUN THAN THE SAMURAI, I'M ALL FOR IT!
YOU ALL RIGHT?
I-I THINK SO.

I SEE. SO IT WAS FORMULATED FOR A VERY SHORT DURATION.
YEAH.
ONCE THAT MDS LOSES ITS MOISTURE, IT DOESN'T WORK ANY-MORE.
WHEN DRY, IT'S JUST LIKE A LAYER OF DUST.
WHAT ABOUT YOU? YOU OKAY?
YOU'VE GOTTA REIN IT IN.
CALM DOWN.
NOW THAT THEY HAVE HARUKA HOSTAGE, WE CAN'T GIVE IN AND ADMIT OUR LOSS. WE HAVE TO FIND A WAY OUT OF THIS.
KOKU (NOD)
I-I KNOW, MAN.

ガ
ガ

HMM !?
CAN YOU BLOCK A TWO-HANDED ASSAULT WITH JUST ONE ARM!?
BA (ZOOM)
WHAT !?
YOU ARE...
HEH, YOU CAN'T. UNLIKE WITH THE SAMURAI, OUR REACH AND STRENGTH ARE EQUAL.
SO WHOEVER CAN STRIKE MORE, WINS. AM I WRONG?

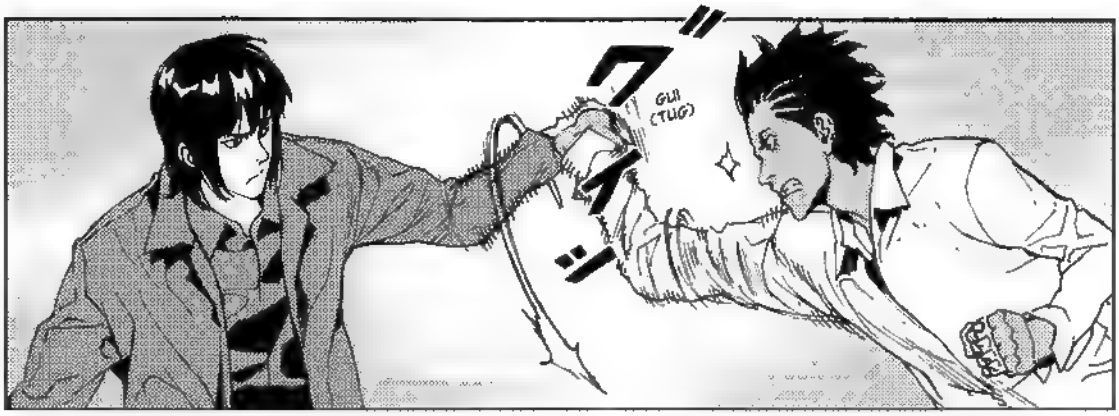
TRY ME ONE MORE TIME.
SUU.. (SWISH)
スゥ
DA (DASH)
...
YOU'RE GONNA TRY TO HANDLE MY FISTS WITH YOUR REAL ARM!?
SON OF A BITCH!
GIRI (GRIT)

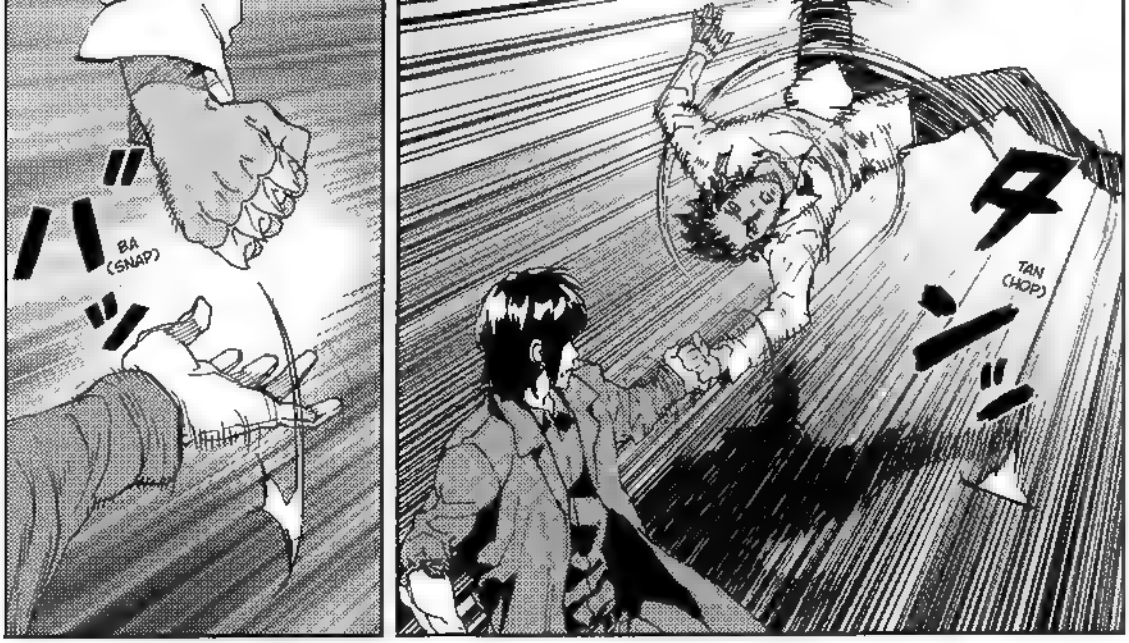
BO
(WHOOSH)
HYUN
(SWISH)
BA
(F.WAP)
BA
BA
BA
GUOO
(WHOOSH)

PASHI
(SNATCH)

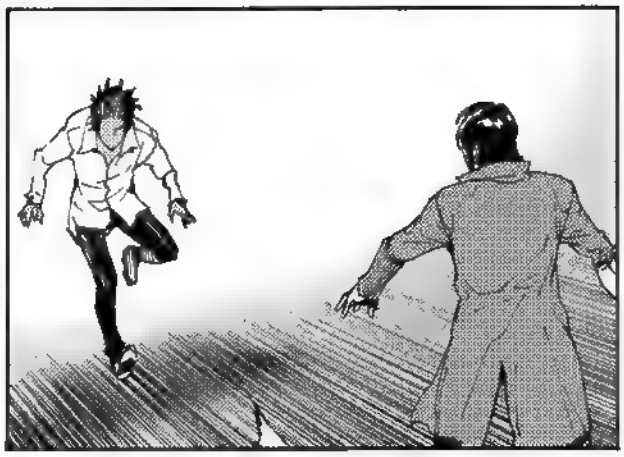
THE PALM SERVES ITS OWN PURPOSE IN BATTLE.
WHA —!?

YOU CANNOT DEFEAT ME WITH BLOWS ALONE!
YOUR FANGS WILL NOT REACH ME!!


GUI (TUG)


BA
(SNAP)
TAN
(HOP)

SO THE RUMORS WEREN'T FOR SHOW ...



MAYBE IT'S LIKE ZELM SAYS— HE'S NOT THE RIGHT MATCH AGAINST ME...
IS HE SAYING HE'S DONE THIS SONG AND DANCE WAY MORE THAN ME!?

?
— …
— …
NOT AGAIN! I'M JUST AT THE BEST PART!
WHAT !?
—
…
HM !?
DA (DSHH)
HEY, WAIT!
KURU (SPIN)
!?
…

WHO'S NEXT!? STEP UP!
C'MON!
GACHA (CLICK)
ガチャ
READY FOR MORE?
!?

ピッ
*memory 1_0075
code name AEGIS
!?
AEGIS
!?

PERFECT!
GU (SING)
IS THIS WHAT YOU WANTED, BOSS?
SO THAT'S WHAT THEY'RE AFTER...
I SEE...
SU (SHH)
MAMORU HIJIKATA ...

BYUN
(WHOOSH)
WHAT ARE YOU DOING!?
BA
(LEAP)
...

DEFEND YOURSELF.
チャッ
CHA (CHK)

...

THAT'S RIGHT.

...

TO SAVE THE TWO GIRLS, YOU'VE GOT TO BEAT DOWN EVERYONE WHO STANDS IN YOUR WAY.
YOU AIN'T GOT NO ALLIES IN THIS FIGHT.

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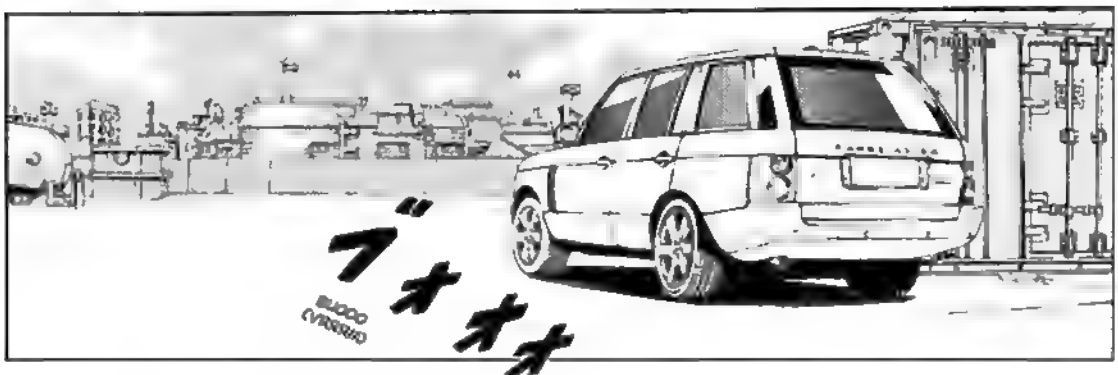
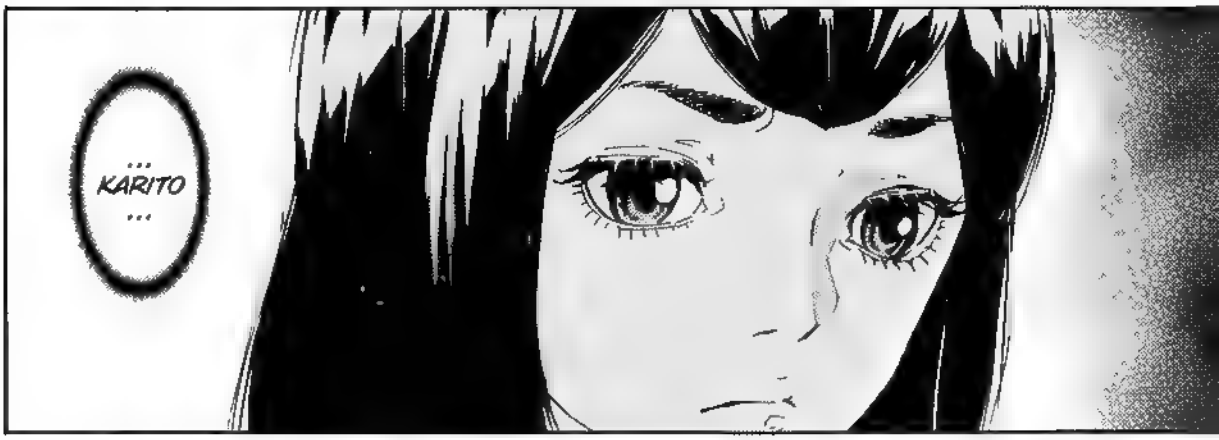
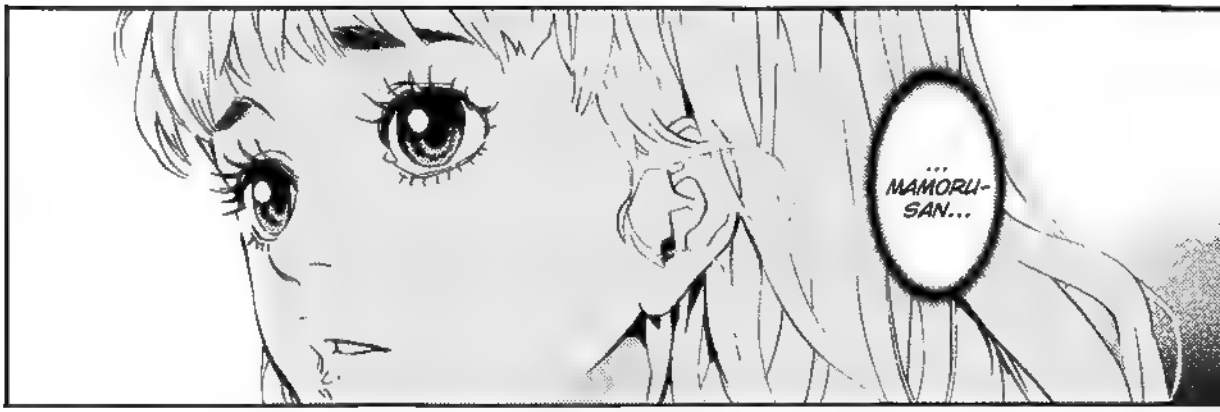

ブオオオ
BUOOO
(VROOM)

...UM...
STAY QUIET FOR NOW.
WE DON'T KNOW HOW THEY MIGHT BE LISTENING IN.
...

ELIMINATING HIM SHOULD BE OUR TOP PRIORITY AT THE MOMENT.
THAT WOULD SUGGEST THAT ANYTHING SHE CANNOT SEE OR PROCESS FOR HERSELF INTERFERES WITH HER ABILITY TO READ THE FUTURE.
IT SEEMS LIKE HER PREMONITIONS DO NOT WORK WHERE THE INVISIBLE MAN IS INVOLVED.


...KARITO...


...MAMORU-SAN...

I SEE NOW...

THERE'S GOT TO BE A STORY BEHIND THIS.

I NEVER EXPECTED TO RUN INTO HIM HERE.

ONE WRONG MOVE, AND THIS ALL BLOWS UP IN OUR FACES.
BUT GALBOA'S MORE IMPORTANT THAN HIM AT THE MOMENT.

WHAT THE HELL AM I SUPPOSED TO DO IN THIS SITUATION!? SHIT!!
...
SU (SWISH)
スッ

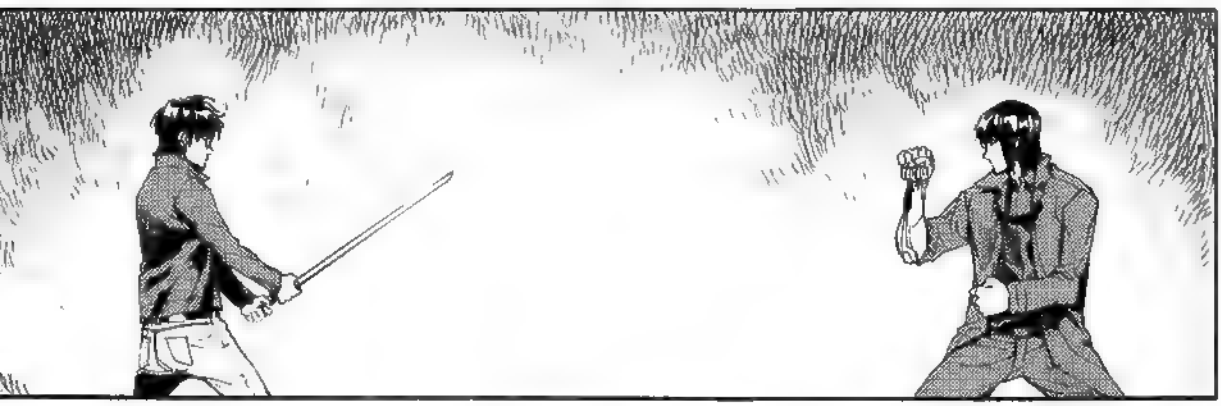
IT'S A FIGHTING STYLE DESIGNED TO MAXIMIZE DEFENSE, WHICH IS FITTING, GIVEN HIS REPUTATION.
DEFENDING IS MUCH SIMPLER, THE SMALLER THE TARGET YOU HAVE TO PROTECT.
HE HOLDS HIS PROSTHETIC ARM OUT IN FRONT...
...AND TURNS TO HIDE THE REST OF HIS BODY BEHIND IT, SHRINKING THE TARGET.
AND THE SAMURAI TAKES THE ORTHODOX STANCE. HOW DO YOU READ HIM?
I SEE.
LOOKS LIKE IT'LL BE A TASK TO BREAK THROUGH THAT DEFENSE.
THEY WILL NATURALLY CHOOSE DIFFERENT FIGHTING STYLES.
SAMURAI HAS THE EDGE IN RANGE, GIVEN HIS KATANA, AND AEGIS IS MORE SKILLED AT DEFENSE.
THEY EACH HAVE THEIR OWN CIRCUM-STANCES AND PERSONALITY.

AND THERE HE GOES!
THE SAMURAI WILL STRIKE FIRST, OF COURSE.
...AND?
HAAAH!!

BA
(SHOOP)
HE'S TAKING THIS SERI-OUSLY ...
WHOA!

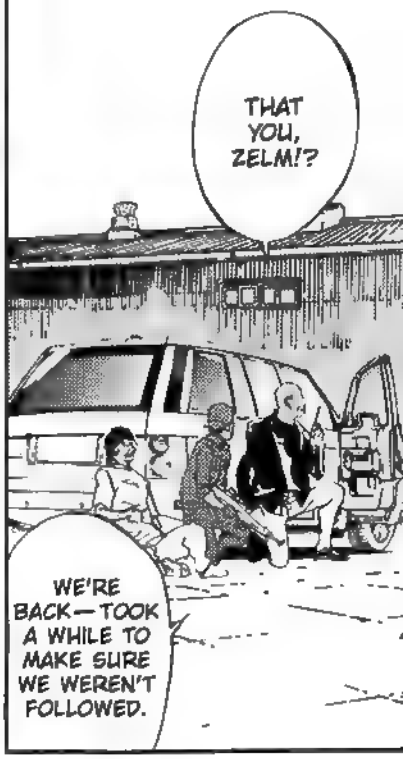
URG ...
THEY'RE BOTH DAMN GOOD...
GARA !?
HIS ARM'S SHATTERED.

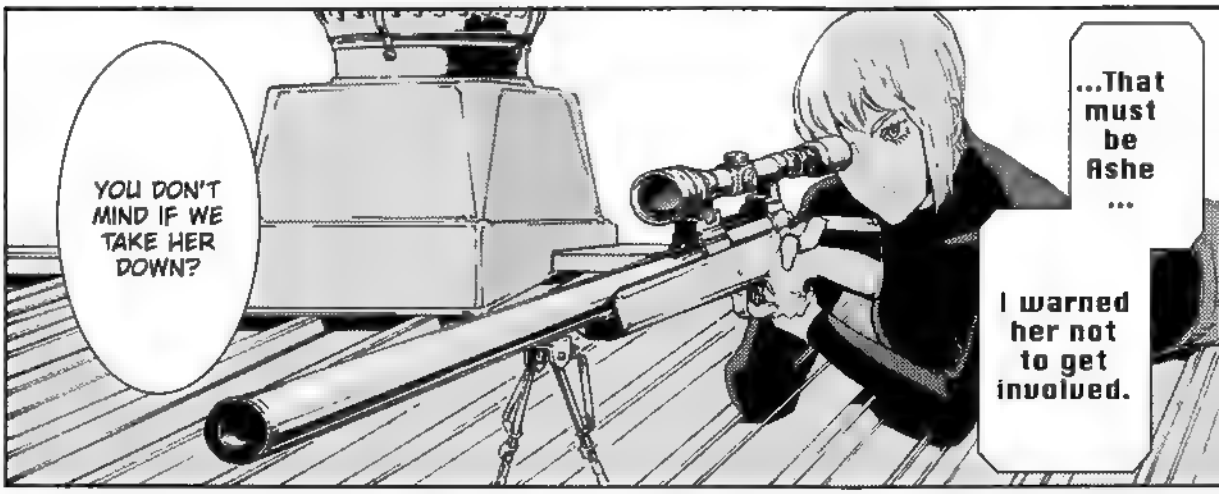
WHO IS THIS GUY!?
...
HNG ...!
YOU CAN'T MOVE BECAUSE OF THE SHOCK?



YOU'RE LATE.
IT'S ME.
BEEP!

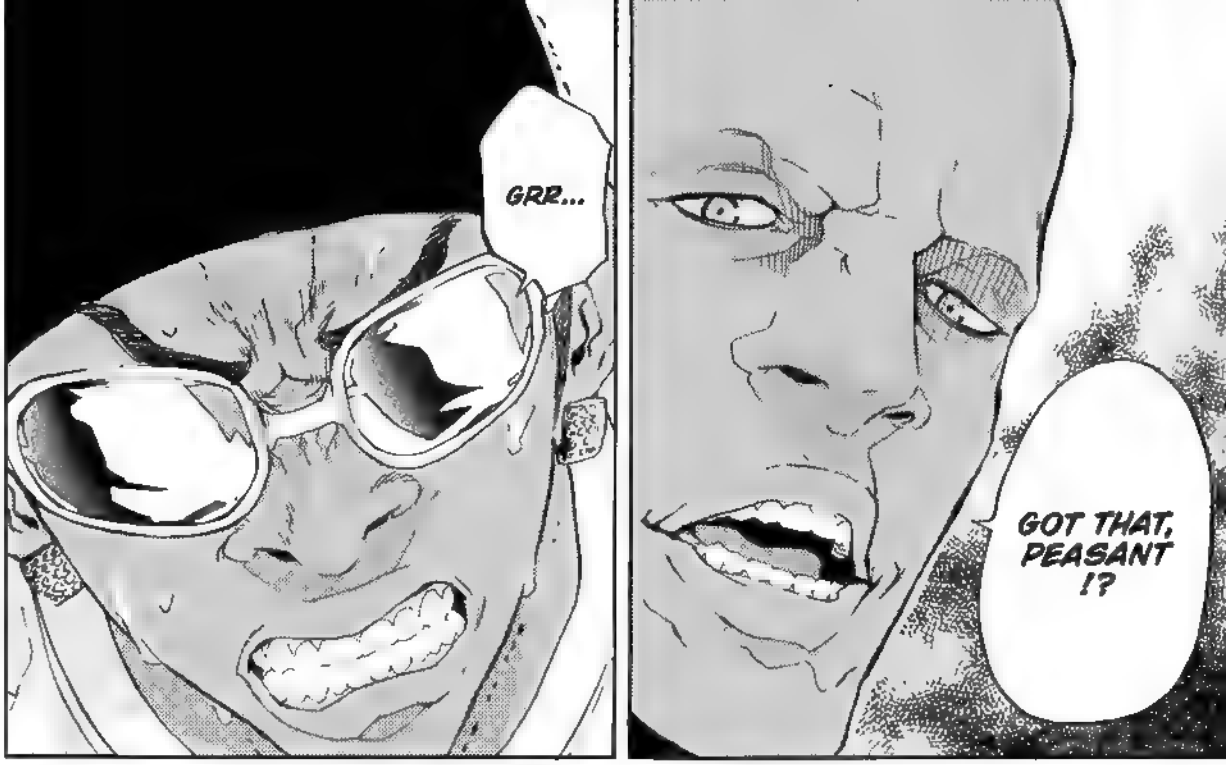
SEEMS LIKE WE'RE TAKING ON SNIPER FIRE FROM THE FACTORY ITSELF. WHAT'S GOING ON!?


THAT YOU, ZELM!?
WE'RE BACK—TOOK A WHILE TO MAKE SURE WE WEREN'T FOLLOWED.

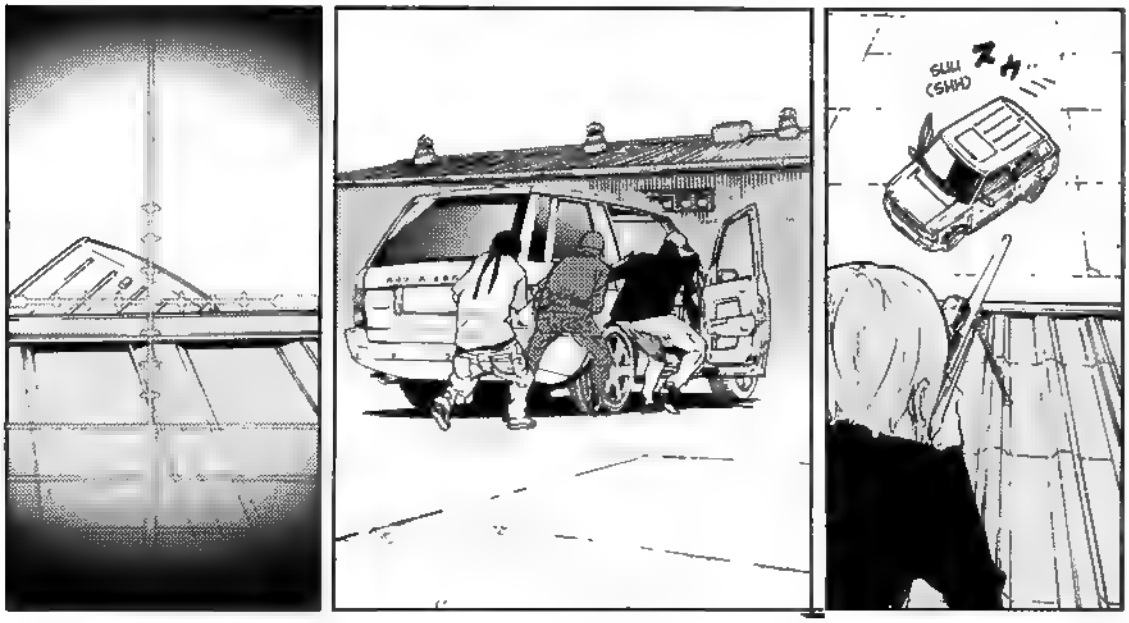

YOU DON'T MIND IF WE TAKE HER DOWN?
...That must be Ashe ...
I warned her not to get involved.

Got it. My damage is recovered already.
IF YOU'RE STILL IN FIGHTING CONDITION, I'VE GOT A JOB FOR YOU.
I'LL LEAVE THAT UP TO YOU. GET BACK HERE AT ONCE AND LEAVE ONE MAN BEHIND.

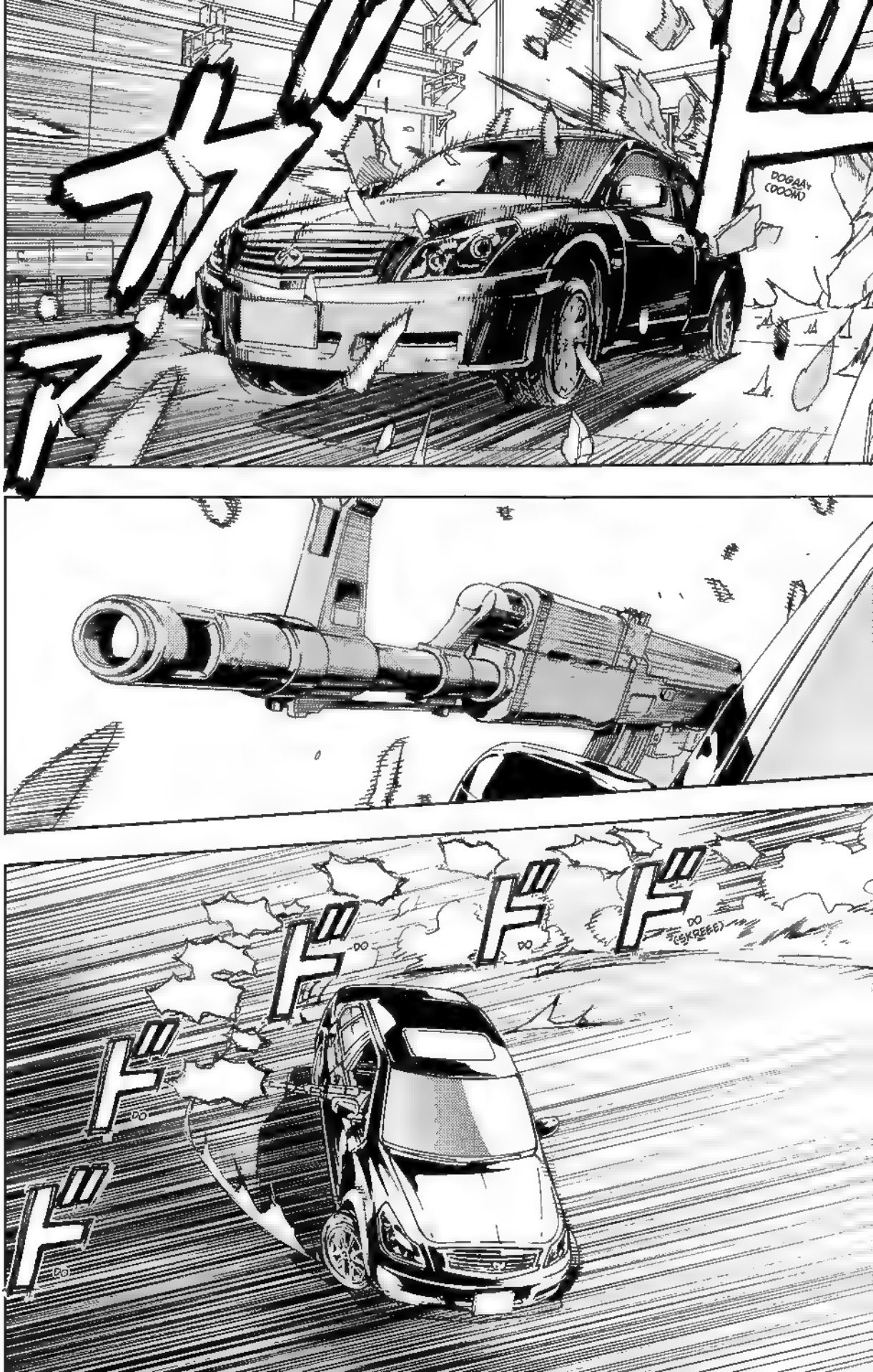
NAH. YOU'RE GOING BACK WITH ME AND TEBOR.
SUCHA (CLICK)
スチャ
YOU SURE ABOUT THIS!?
IT'S UP TO HIM.
YOU GET RID OF HER.
WE'RE UP AGAINST A SNIPER!
THE OBVIOUS CHOICE IS TO HAVE ME KILL 'EM!
WHAT!?
IT'S JUST A GIRL. SHOULD BE PERFECT FOR A WOUNDED MAN.


GRR...
GOT THAT, PEASANT !?

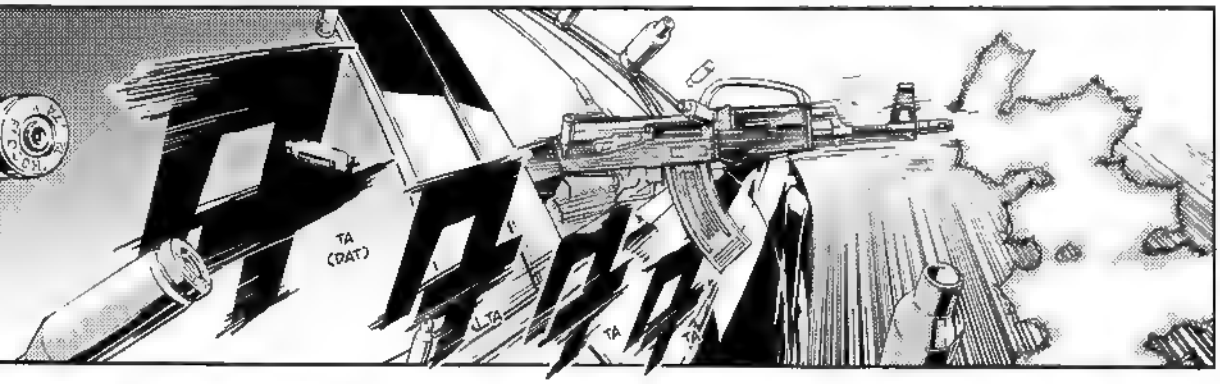
ガコン
GAKON (SFX: HUNK)
JUST AS SELFISH AND PUSHY AS EVER...


SUU (SHH)

TA (TEK)
DAMN!
THEY MANEUVERED THEIR WAY TO SAFETY.
BLLOOO (VWOOM)

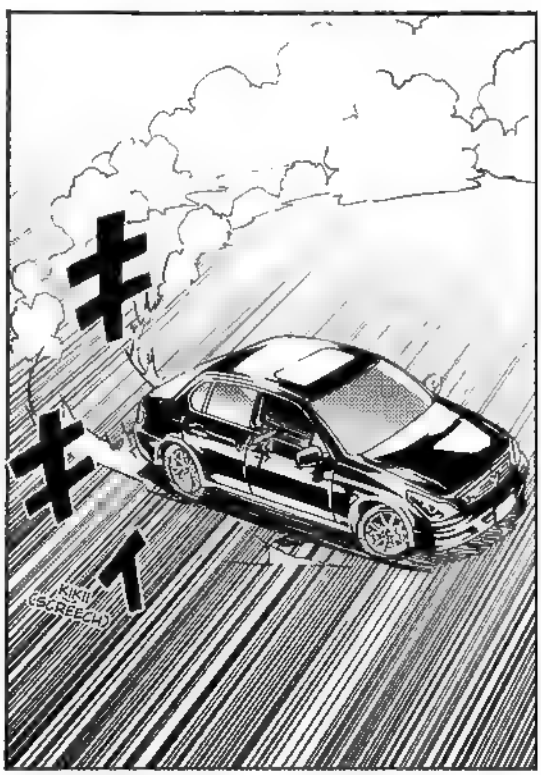

ドゴォ
DOGAA+
(DOOM)
ドゴ
DO
ドゴ
DO
ドゴ
DO
ドゴ
DO
DO
(SKREEE)

BA
(LEAP)
GA
GA
GA
GA
GA
(RATTA)


TA
(DAT)
TA
TA
TA

ガ
チャ
GACHA
(CLICK)

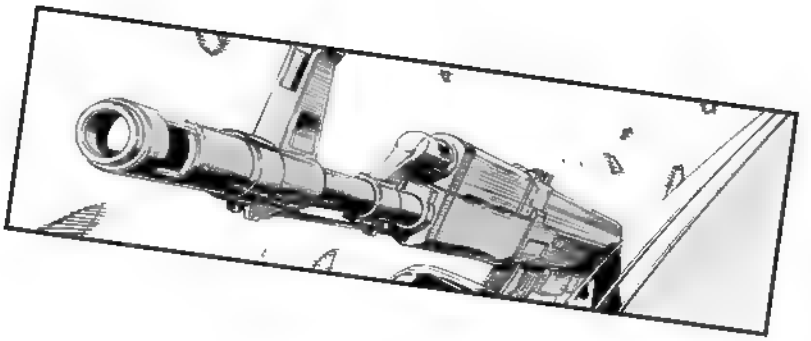
!?


キ
キ
イ
KIKII
(SCREECH)

キン
KIN (TING)
IS THAT —?
JESUS !?

YOU THINK I'D SHOW UP LATE TO THE PARTY?
JESUS?

...THIS IS PERFECT TIMING.
ACTU-ALLY...
WELCOME HIM INTO THE DANCE HALL.
...
YOU GONNA PUT EVEN MORE PRESSURE ON THE SAMURAI?
NOW THAT'S JUST COLD.

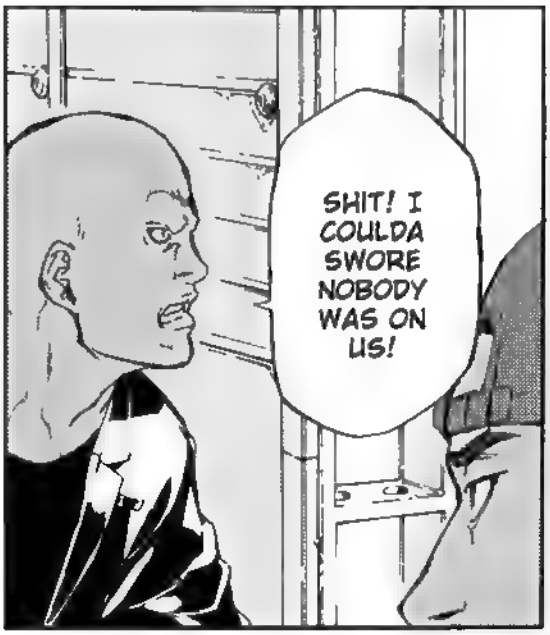


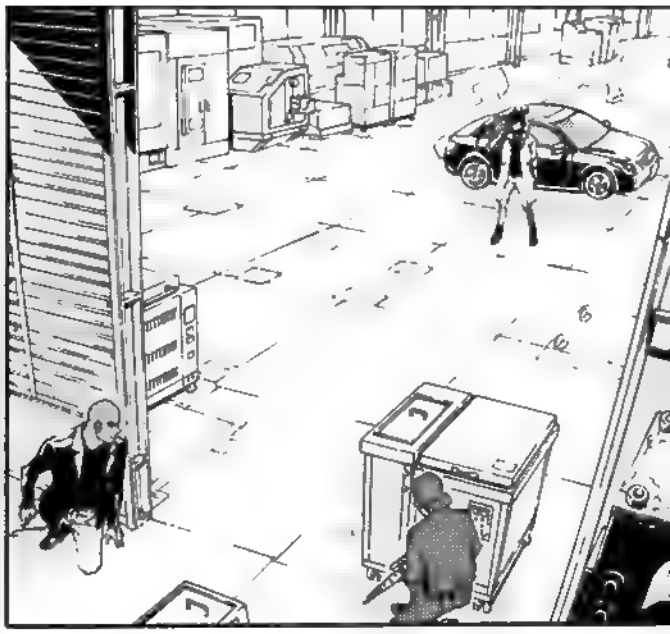
Until
Death
do us
Part

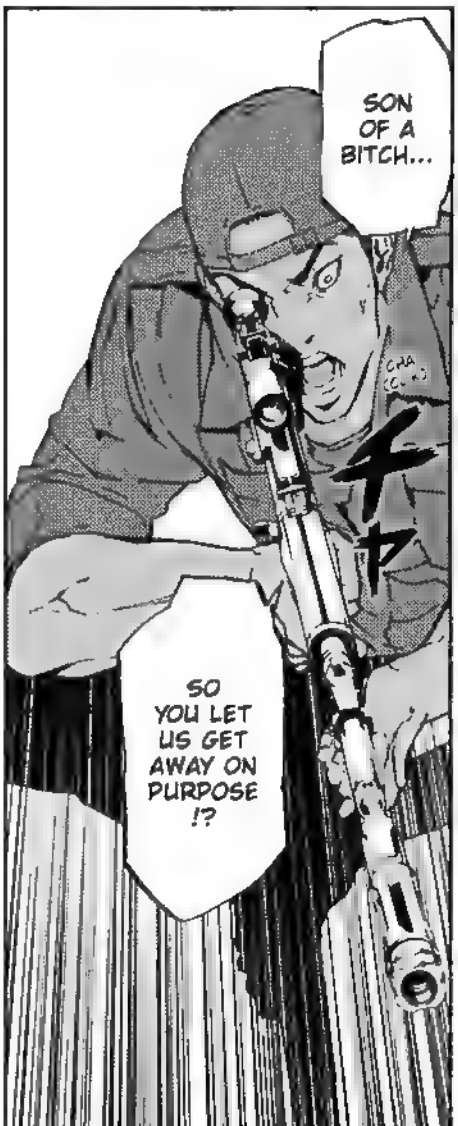
WELL?

chapter 136

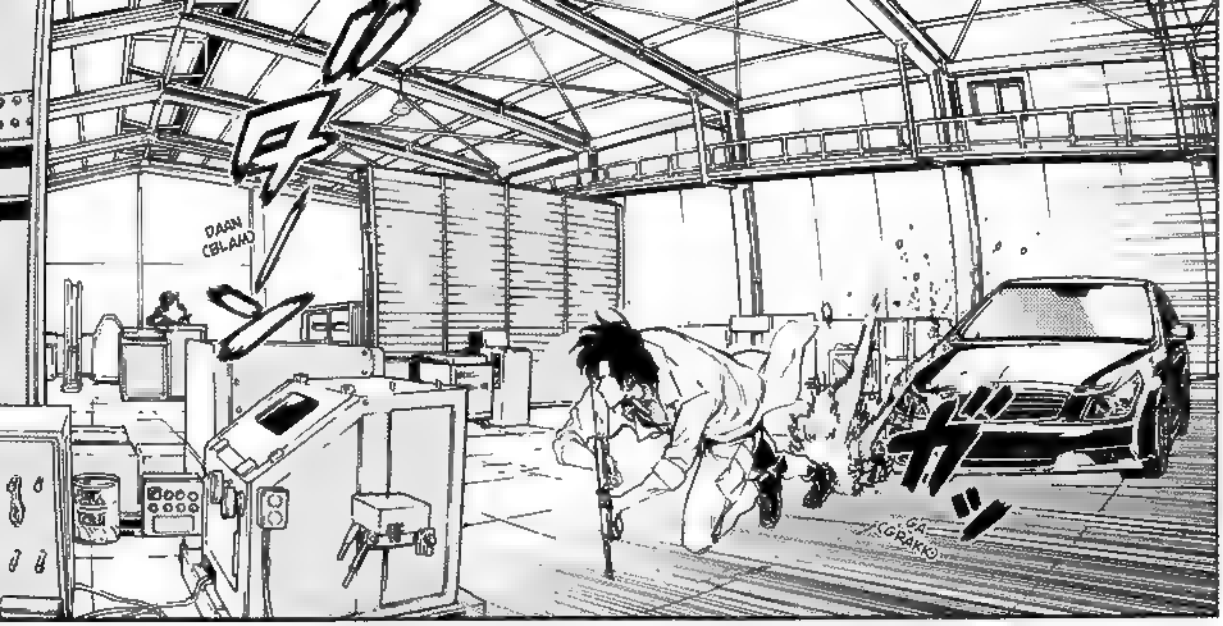
I DIDN'T GET AN INVITATION ...
...BUT YOU'LL INVITE ME IN ANYWAY, RIGHT?


SHIT! I COULDA SWORE NOBODY WAS ON US!




SON OF A BITCH...
SO YOU LET US GET AWAY ON PURPOSE !?

I JAMMED A TRANSMITTER INTO THE LITTLE ONE'S STOMACH! JUST SO NO ONE COULD FIND IT!
THAT'S HOW I COULD AFFORD TO TAKE MY TIME FOLLOWING UP WITH YOU.


DAAN
(BLAM)
GA
(GRAKK)

DO
DO
DO
(RATTA)
DO

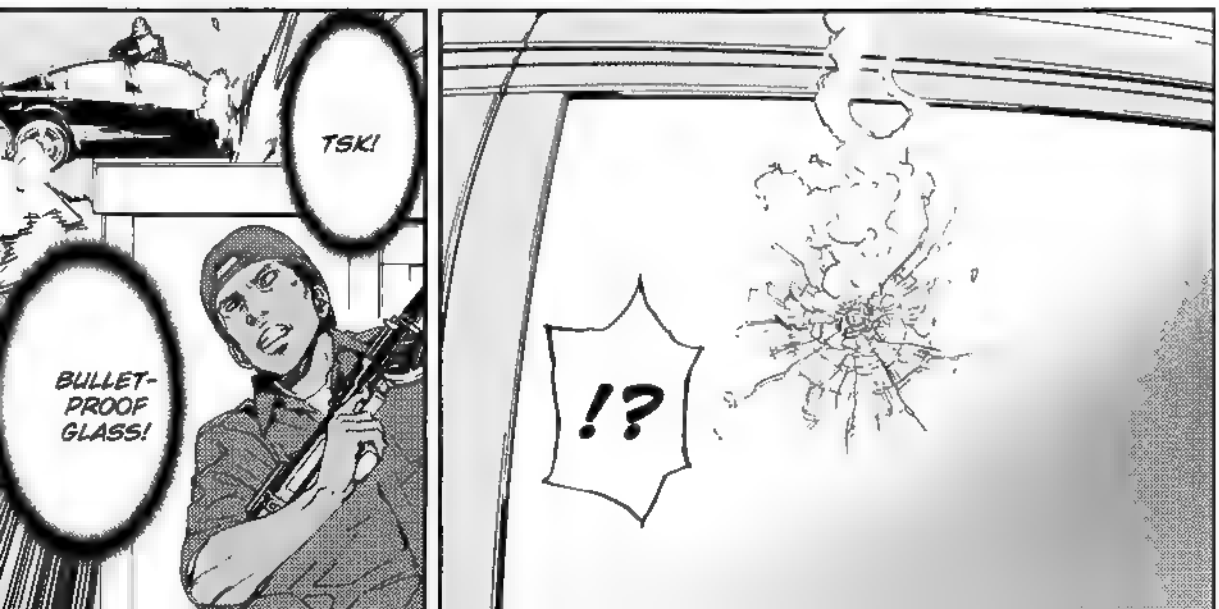
HERE
WE ARE.
ZA
(ZSHH)

GACHA
(CLICK)

...KAIZER?
HE'S HERE TOO...?
YOU'RE THE ONE USING SOMEONE ELSE'S VEHICLE TO CHARGE INTO ENEMY TERRITORY.
SO YOU HITCH A RIDE WITH YOUR ENEMY, AND THEN YOU MAKE ME DO THE DIRTY WORK TOO?

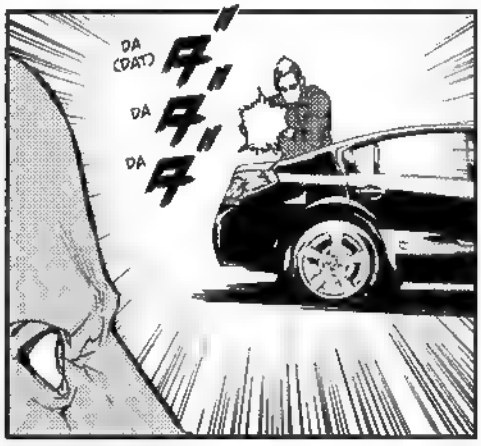
I'VE GOT TO DO WHATEVER IT TAKES TO GET BACK AT 'EM.
DA
DA (RATTA)
DA
TWO OF MY PEOPLE ARE DEAD.

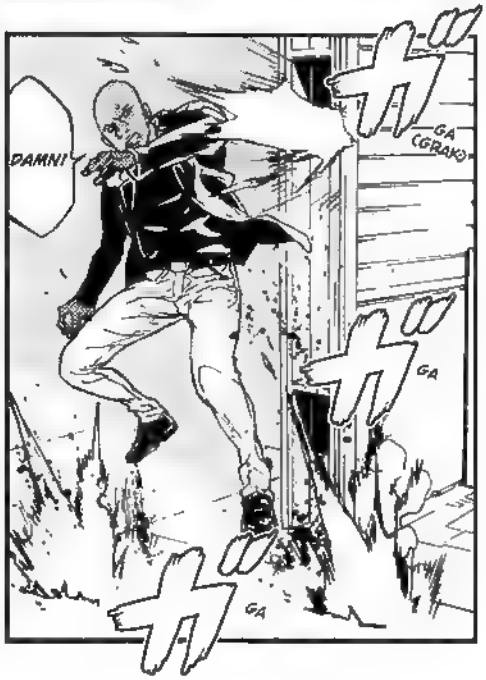
BISHI (CRAK)
I'LL BLAST HIM STRAIGHT THROUGH THE CAR.
DON (BLAM)


TSK!
BULLET-PROOF GLASS!
!?

BE CAREFUL.
YOUR SPECIALTY'S NO GOOD AT THIS RANGE.
STEP BACK AND TAKE SOME DISTANCE WHILE ME AND TEBOR KEEP THEM BUSY.
BAH! WHAT-EVER!
YOU FORGET WHAT MY SKILL IS?
I AIN'T FALLEN ENOUGH THAT I NEED YOUR CONCERN.
HANG ON!!
JUST WATCH THIS.

DA
I HATE TO STEAL A LINE FROM JESUS...
DA
DA
...BUT I'D APPRE-CIATE AN INVITATION OF MY OWN!


DA (DAT)
DA
DA


DAMN!
GA (GRAK)
GA
GA

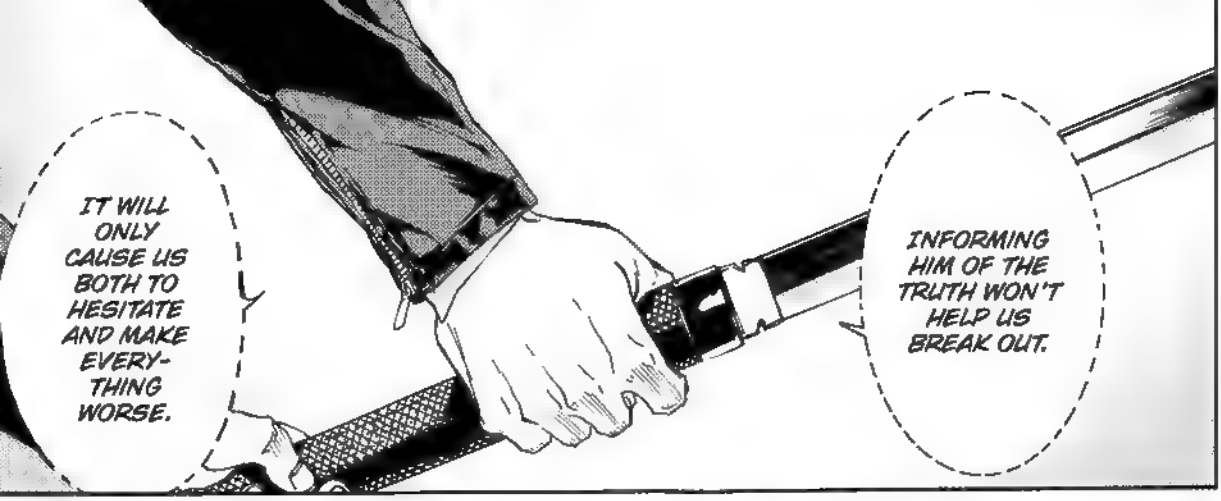
GN
(KCHING)
GA
(WHAK)
GA
GA

HMM...IT'S IMPRESSIVE, NO DOUBT.
BUT IS HE REALLY GOIN' ALL-OUT?

I DON'T THINK I'VE GOT A SENSE OF HIS POWER YET.
IT'S STILL UNTAPPED, I THINK...

HE IS NOT PARTICULARLY FERVENT ON THE ATTACK.
VERY INSIGHTFUL.

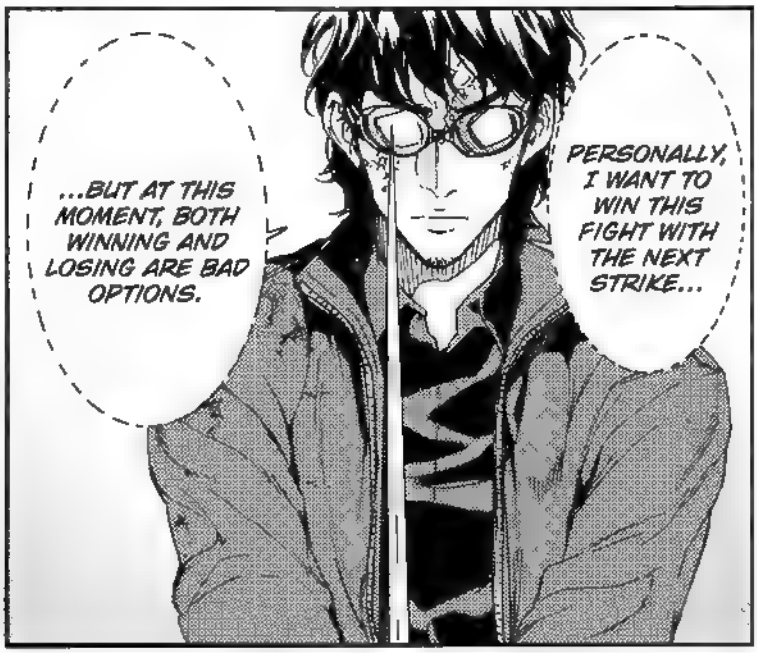
...I CAN THINK OF THREE OPTIONS.
BUT THE BEST OF THOSE...
IF I'M GONNA BREAK THROUGH HIS IRON WALL OF DEFENSE...
If you beat Aegis now...
...we might not ever escape this bind we're in!!
Hey!
NO!
YOU OUGHTA TELL HIM WHAT'S GOING ON AND COOPERATE —
PLUS, THEY'VE GOT HIS PARTNER HELD HOSTAGE TOO!


IT WILL ONLY CAUSE US BOTH TO HESITATE AND MAKE EVERY-THING WORSE.
INFORMING HIM OF THE TRUTH WON'T HELP US BREAK OUT.

BUT...

IF THEY FIND OUT WE'RE CHEATING, IT'S THE OTHER GIRL WHO'LL BE IN TROUBLE.
DON'T ASSUME THEY'RE GOING TO PLAY ALONG WITH THE RULES OF THEIR GAME!

WHAT SHOULD I DO? DEFEAT HIM NOW!?


...BUT AT THIS MOMENT, BOTH WINNING AND LOSING ARE BAD OPTIONS.
PERSONALLY, I WANT TO WIN THIS FIGHT WITH THE NEXT STRIKE...

WHAT'S WRONG, HIJIKATA ...?

WHY DO YOU HESITATE?
I KNOW THIS IS NOT YOUR BEST...

!?
ガチ
GACHI (CLICK)

!?

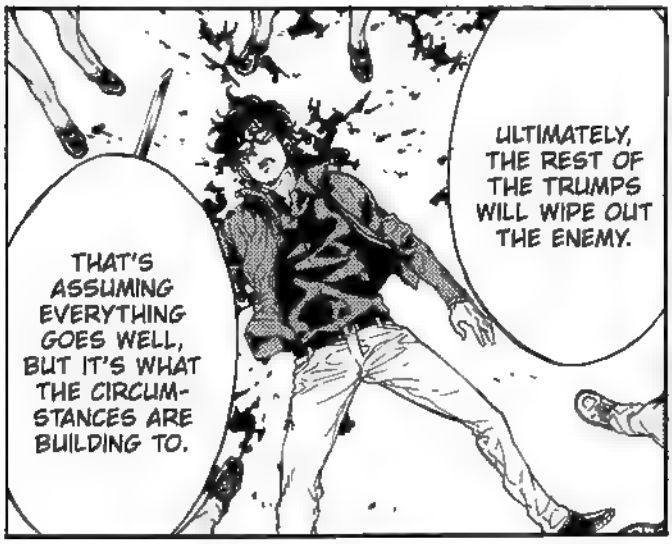
KASHA (CLINK)
カシャ

IAI QUICK DRAW...?
HE'S TRYING SOMETHING DIFFERENT!
BUT...

...
...HOW WILL HE REACT WHEN IT HAPPENS!?
GOTTA GIVE MAMORU ANY ADVANTAGE I CAN...
KATA
KATA
CRAP! ISN'T THERE ANYTHING I CAN DO!?
KATA (TAP)
KATA
KATA
!?
HUH!?
IGAWA...
SET THE YOU-KNOW-WHAT.

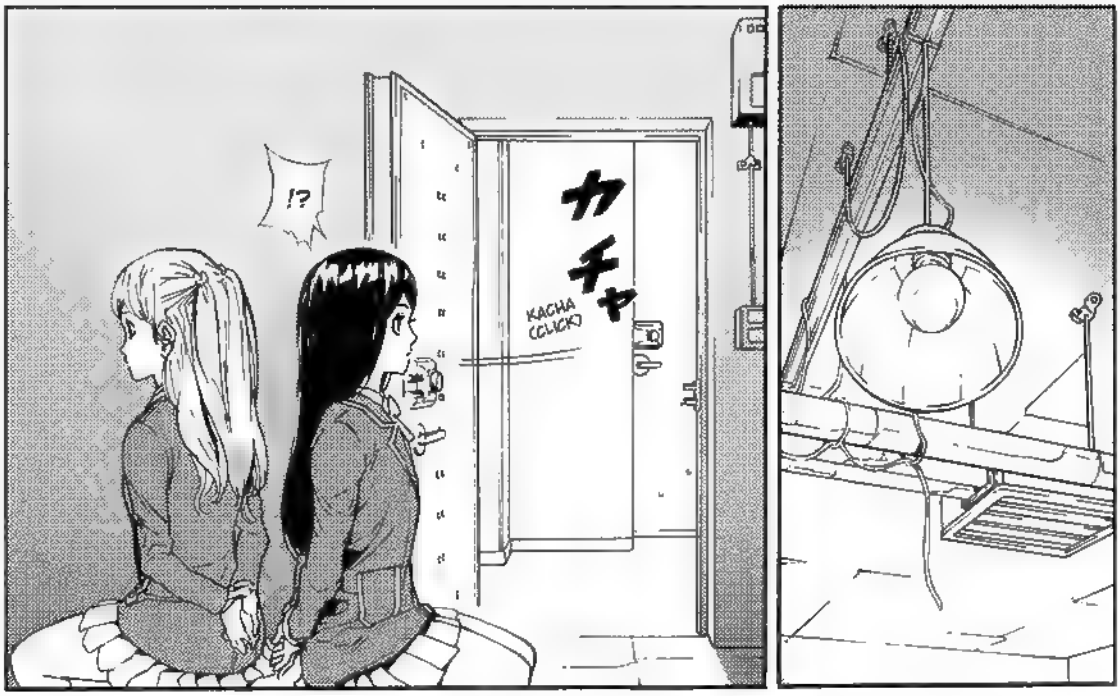
I WANT TO KNOW IF THE LETHAL SKILLS I'VE DEVELOPED CAN OVERCOME A THOUSAND YEARS OF ANCIENT SWORD ARTS...
...AS WELL AS STUDY HOW WELL THE OLD WAYS CAN STILL WORK TODAY.
TO SPEAK HONESTLY...
...I WISH TO TEST HIM MYSELF, RATHER THAN LEAVE IT TO AEGIS.
THE QUICKEST RESOLUTION IS TO JUST KILL THE SAMURAI NOW...
THEN WE COULD HAND OVER THE GIRL AND TAKE ALL THE BOUNTY MONEY.
YOU'RE A SICK MAN, ZELM.
THEN AGAIN, YOU LIVED THROUGH HALF A CENTURY OF GUERRILLA WARFARE, SO I GUESS IT'S A PART OF YOU NOW.
IF NECESSARY, I MIGHT MAKE USE OF HIS STYLE MYSELF.

BUT EVEN IF THE PERFECT DEFENDER AEGIS WINS, HE WON'T KILL THE MAN.
THAT'S WHAT WAU'S THERE FOR— INSURANCE.
AND EVEN IF HE STILL WINS, JESUS SHOWS UP, AND THEY'VE GOTTA FIGHT AFTER ALL.


ULTIMATELY, THE REST OF THE TRUMPS WILL WIPE OUT THE ENEMY.
THAT'S ASSUMING EVERYTHING GOES WELL, BUT IT'S WHAT THE CIRCUM-STANCES ARE BUILDING TO.

AND JESUS AIN'T A BIG ENOUGH SAP TO LET HIM GO.

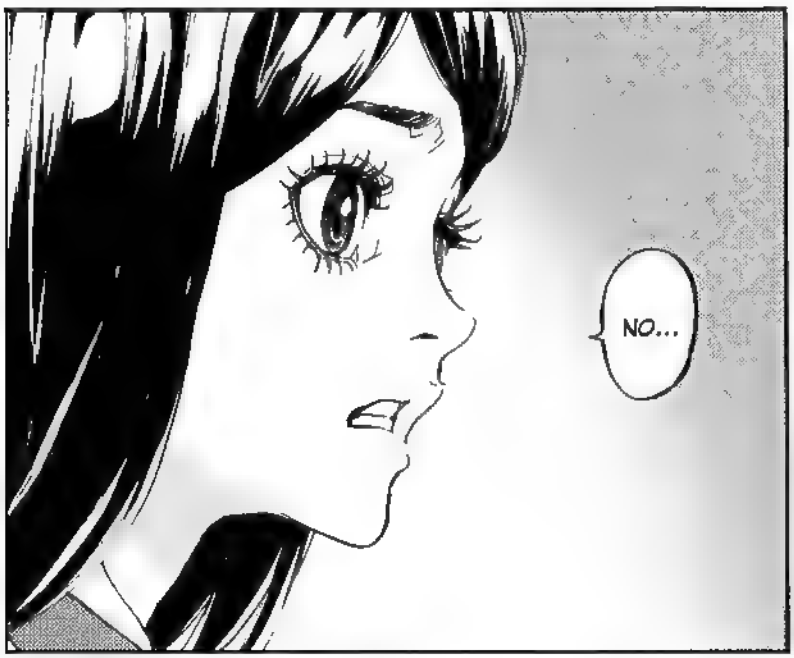
IT IS CERTAINLY A THOROUGH ENOUGH PLAN TO WORK, I BELIEVE.


!?
カチャ
KACHA (CLICK)

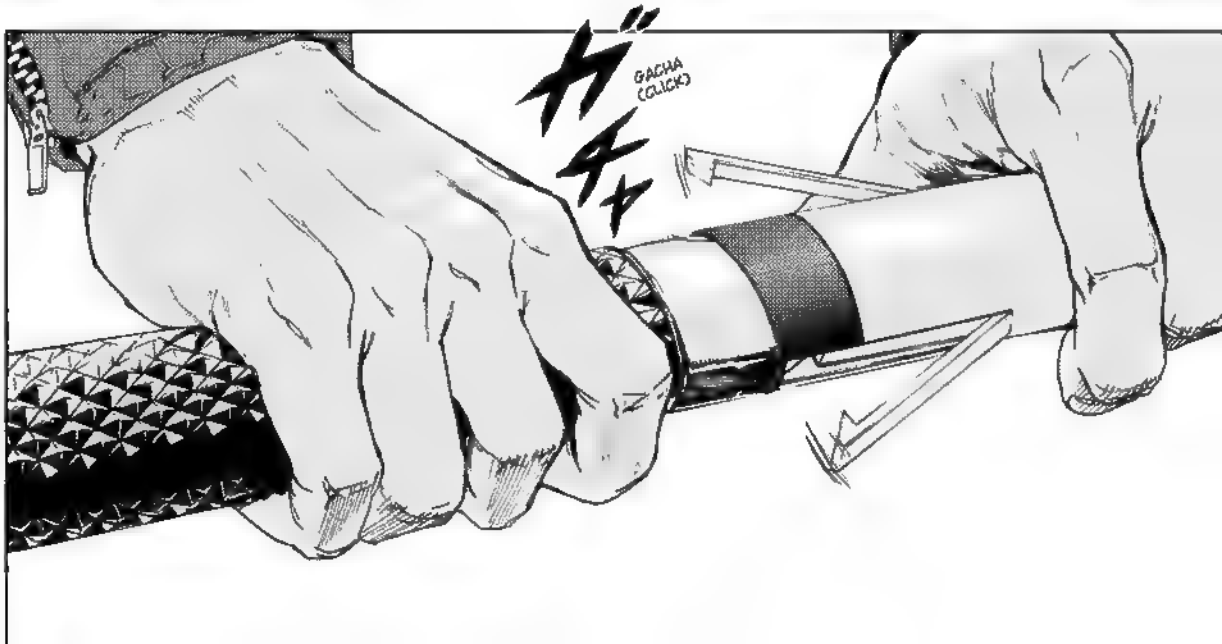
AAH!!
グイ
GUI (TUG)

!?
パラ
PARA (FLIP)

WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO WITH HER!?
IF YOU'RE GOING TO USE SOME-ONE, USE ME!


NO...

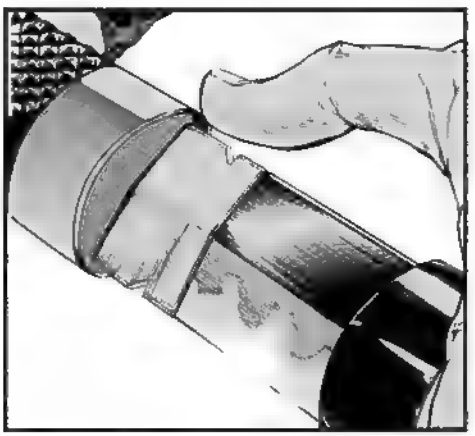
BATAN (SLAM)


GACHA (CLICK)

スウ...
SUU
(SHH)

...HERE HE COMES...

...HERE HE COMES...



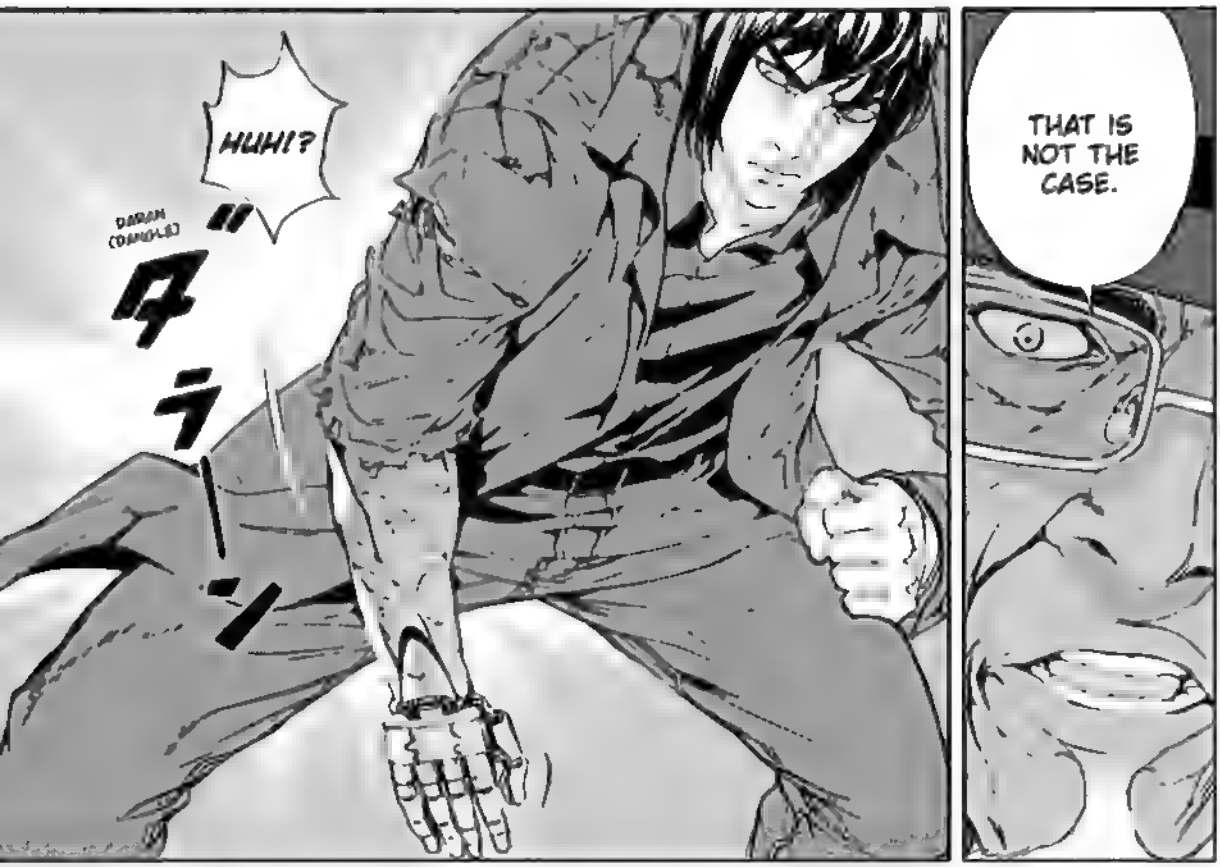
Until
Death
do us
Part

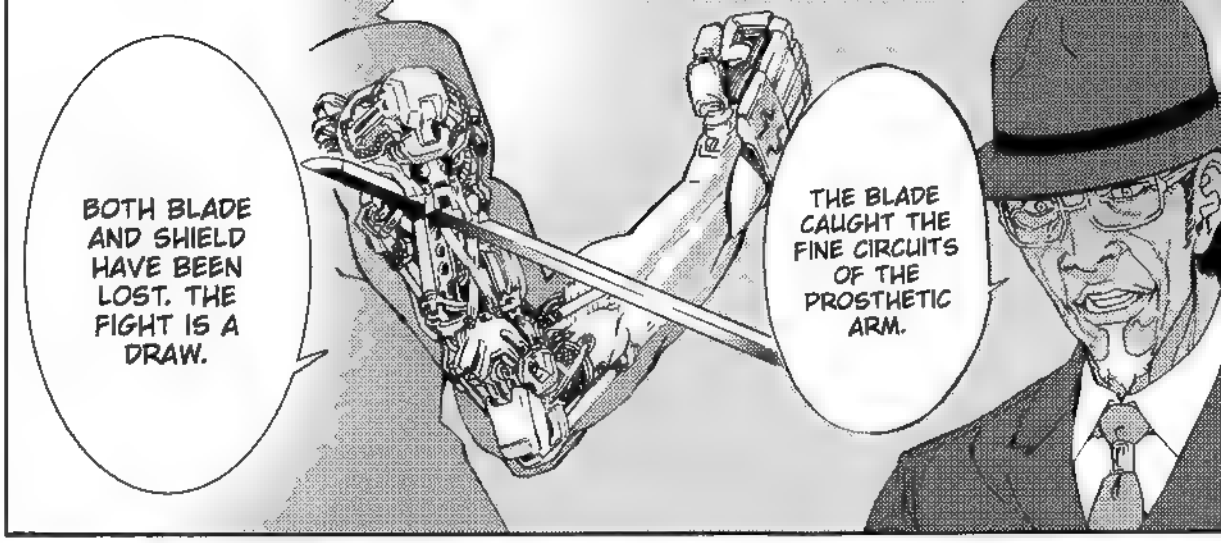
chapter 137

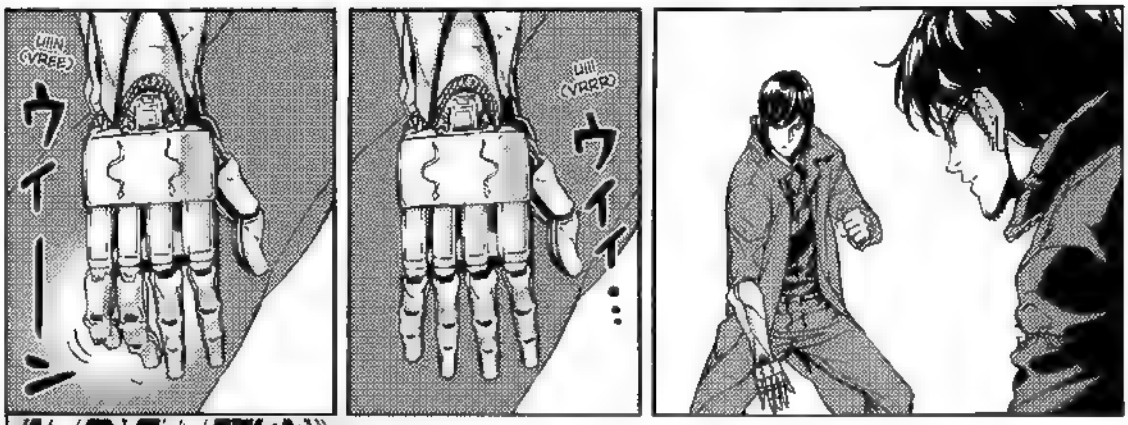
chapter 137

ピキーン
PIKIIN (CRAAK)
カ
KA (THUK)
YOU SEE THAT!?
EVERY DETAIL.

THE STRIKE WAS SO FIERCE THAT AEGIS COULD NOT BLOCK THE BLADE CLEANLY...
...SO HE WAS FORCED TO TAKE THE CUT, THEN BENT BACK STRONG ENOUGH TO SNAP THE BLADE.
DAMN, THAT PROTECTOR'S GOOD. HOW'D HE THINK FAST ENOUGH FOR THAT?
LOOKS LIKE THE SAMURAI LOSES THE FIGHT.

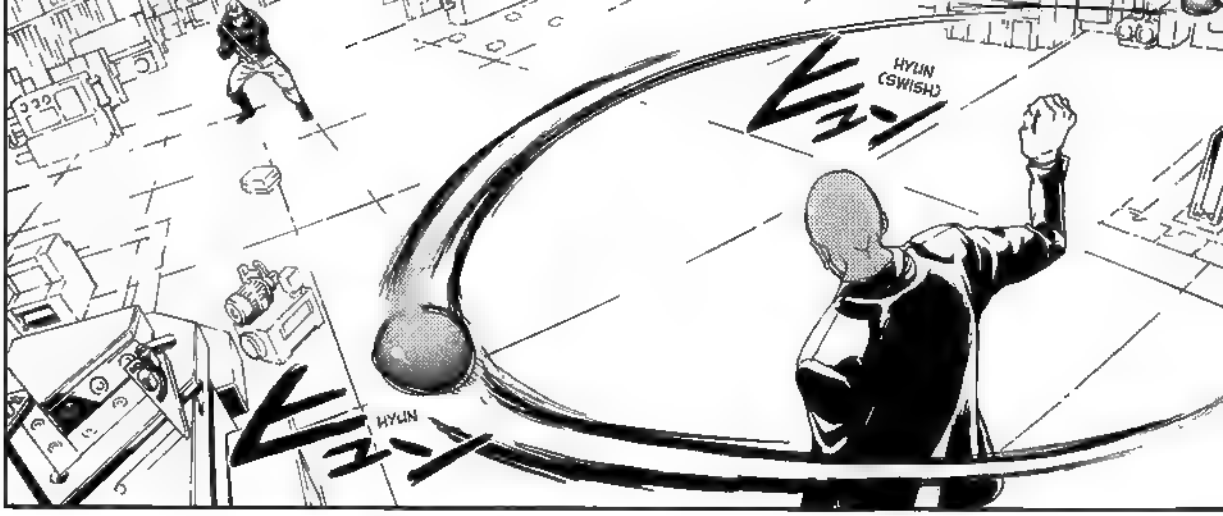

THAT IS NOT THE CASE.
HUH!?
DARAN (DANGLE)
ダラ〜ン


BOTH BLADE AND SHIELD HAVE BEEN LOST. THE FIGHT IS A DRAW.
THE BLADE CAUGHT THE FINE CIRCUITS OF THE PROSTHETIC ARM.


UIIN (VREE)
ウィーン
UIII (VRRR)
ウィィ…

GU (CLENCH)
グッ

...
I'M AFRAID MY BACKUP CIRCUITS ARE STILL FUNCTIONAL.
YOU MUST DO BETTER TO STOP MY RIGHT ARM.
THIS IS A BETTER MATCHUP THAN I THOUGHT!
HO-HO! HE'S STILL DOWN FOR IT!
...THIS AIN'T NO FUN...
HE HASN'T GIVEN UP YET...


HYUN (SWISH)
HYUN

GET FUCKED!

HYUN

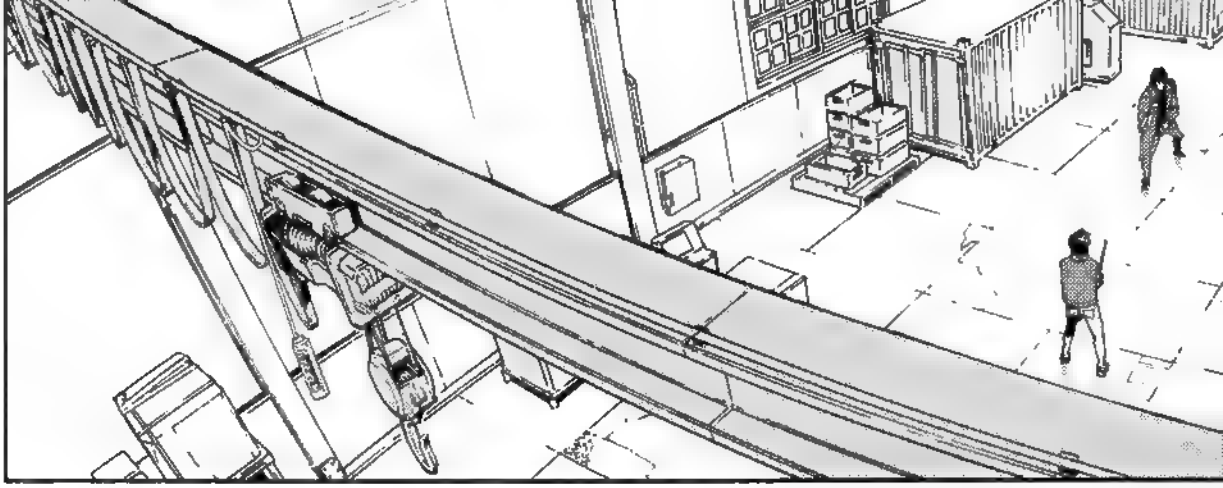
!?
KURU (SPIN)
KURU
TAN (TAK)
TCH!
KAN (GAK)
KAN
BA (SNAP)
GUI (YANK)
ALL RIGHT! LET'S SEE IF YOU CAN STEP TO ME NOW!!

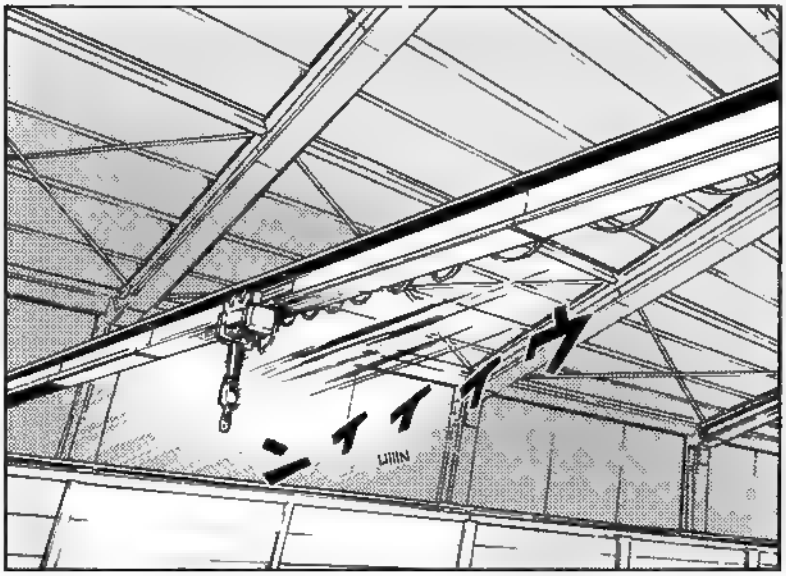
SASA (SWISH)
I WON'T BE HOLDING BACK THIS TIME.
BA (LEAP)
C'MON! SHOW YOUR-SELF!

PAN
(BLAM)
HMPH
...
TA
(TEK)

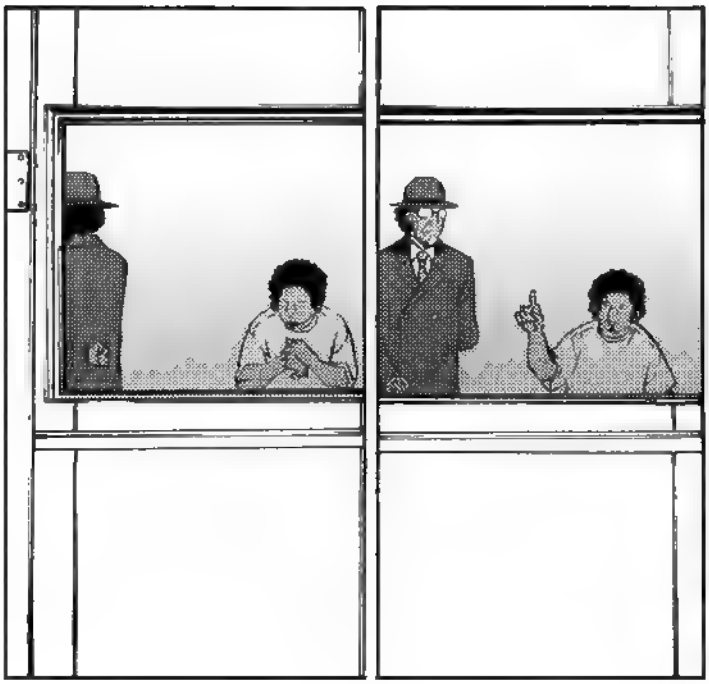
BUN (WHOOSH)
ZUZAZA (SHHK)
NOT THAT SIMPLE.
DOGA (WHAM)
WHAT ...?

THE MORE PRECISE THE SHOOTER...
...THE EASIER TO PREDICT THE TARGET.
...HE INTERCEPTED THE BULLET WITH THAT TOOL THE MOMENT I FIRED!?
YOU CAN'T MEAN...
SHOW ME WHAT YOU GOT, NIGHT GAUNT!
NEVER EXPECTED IT TO BE ABLE TO ABSORB A MAGNUM SLUG.




ニィイイイウ
UIIIN

!?
ウィー
UIN (YWEE)
HM!?



WHAT ARE THEY DOING NOW!?

TA (TEK)
タタッ
TA
SU (SWISH)
スッ
BA (SLIP)
ハッ
!?

HIJIKATA! AEGIS!?

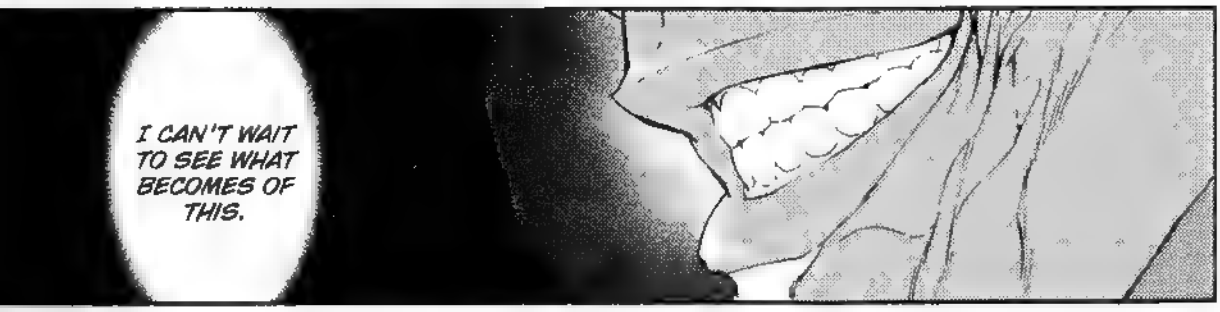
WELCOME, JESUS.
AND FOR YOU, AEGIS, A LATE INTRODUCTION— I'M CALLIN' THE SHOTS FOR THE TRUMPS.
MIC
BROUGHT OUR NEW GUEST.
Good job. Now get outta there.

I know this is a sudden request, but I need you two to kill the samurai.

IN EXCHANGE WE WILL RELEASE THE TWO STUDENTS RELATED TO YOU.
SCREW YOU! WHY WOULD I FOLLOW YOUR—
KARITO !?

Excuse me if I'm wrong, but shouldn't you be working harder to free this vulnerable little girl than that deadly samurai?
SON OF A...
THERE'S NO ROOM FOR NEGOTIATION IN THE MATTER.
...Aegis.
You gotta treat your partner right...
...

SAMURAI, AEGIS, JESUS...
ALL ELITE WARRIORS, MASTERS OF THEIR TRADE.


I CAN'T WAIT TO SEE WHAT BECOMES OF THIS.

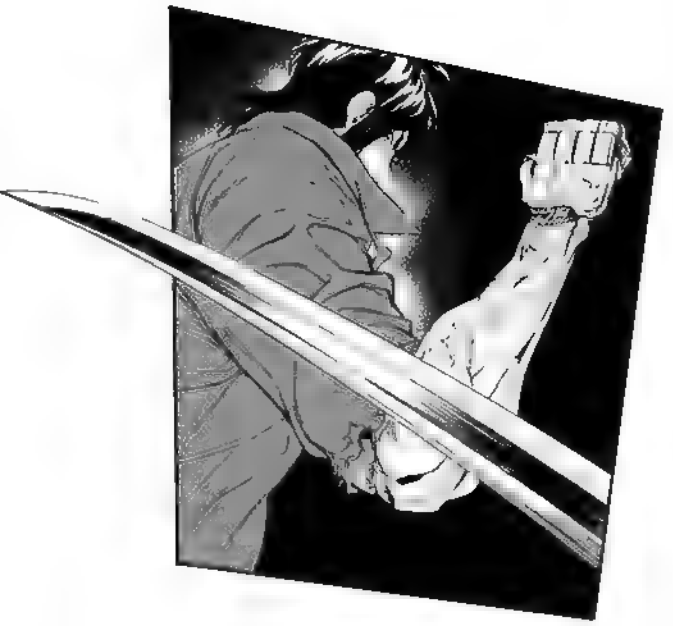
UGH...

WHUH —!!
BLO (WHOOSH)

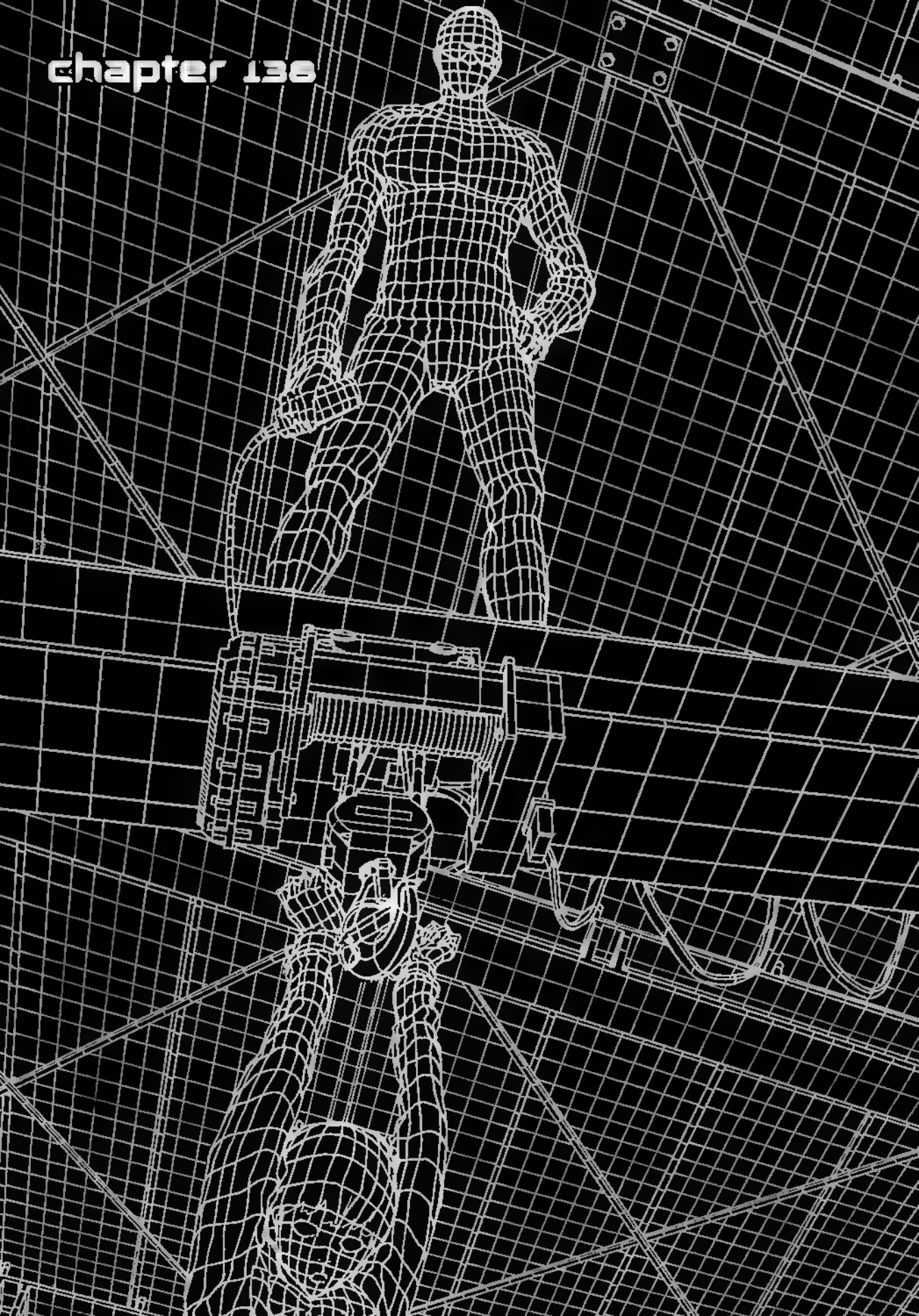
YOU ASS-HOLE!
Y...

WE WERE FATED TO SQUARE OFF SOMEDAY. DOES IT MATTER WHAT THE REASON IS?
JESUS, AEGIS—I WILL FACE YOU BOTH!

...
IT'S ALL I WANT.
...SO YOU'RE NOT GONNA TAKE NO FOR AN ANSWER ...?
WITH THAT BROKEN KATANA!?



HARUKA !?
SICK BAS-TARDS ...
...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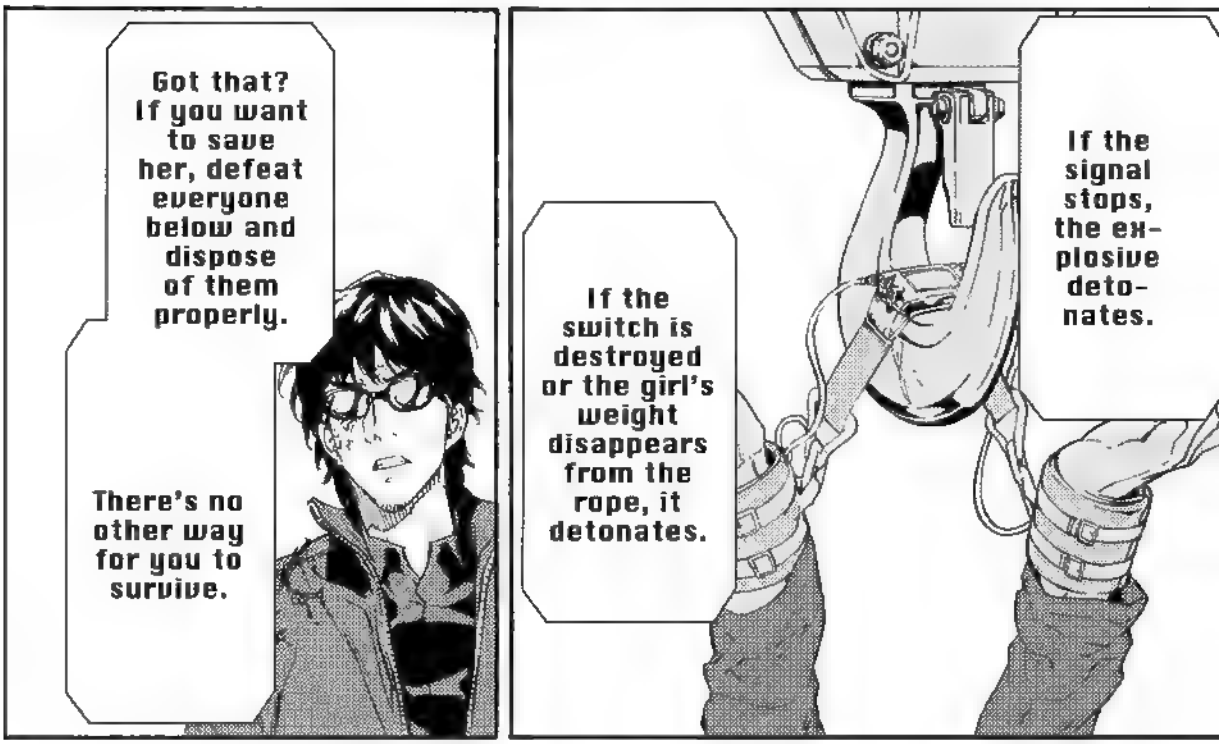
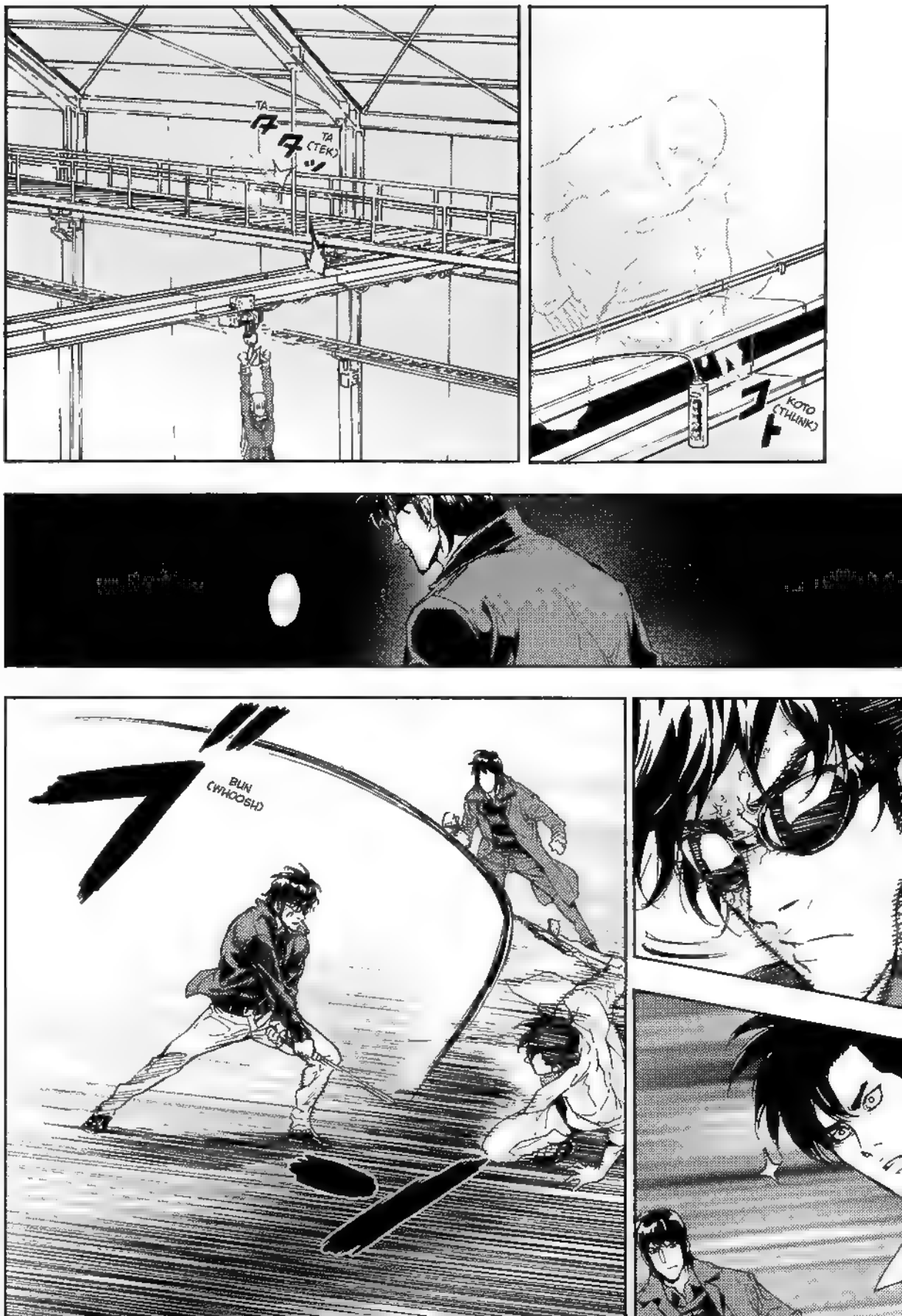
FIXED TO THE DEVICE HOLDING THE GIRL UP HERE IS A SWITCH THAT CORRESPONDS TO THE EXPLOSIVE WE IMPLANTED INTO YOU.
Stay calm and listen.


Got that? If you want to save her, defeat everyone below and dispose of them properly.
There's no other way for you to survive.
If the switch is destroyed or the girl's weight disappears from the rope, it detonates.
If the signal stops, the explosive detonates.

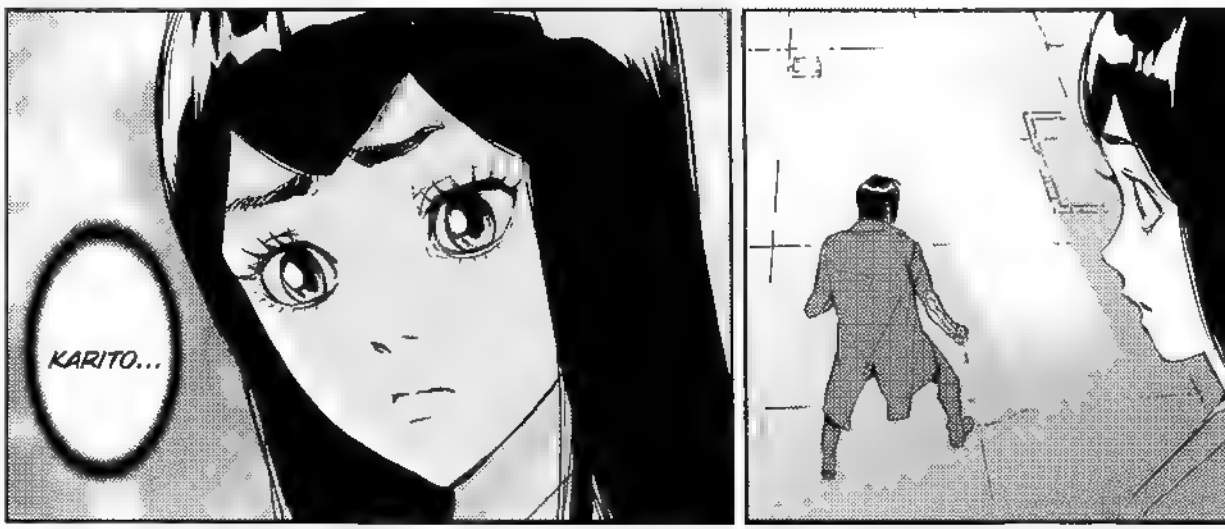
NIYA (LEER)
ニヤ
NIYA
ニヤ
...
GLI (SHOVE)
GO ON. BEG HIM FOR HELP.


TA
TA
(TEK)
KOTO
(THUNK)
BUN
(WHOOSH)

ドドド
DO
DO
(BLAM)
ド
DO
ガガガ
GA
GA
GA
(GRAK)

...RGH...
TA
(RATTA) TA
TA

IT'S ALL GOING ACCORDING TO PLAN SO FAR.
OOOH.


KARITO...

HYU (SWISH)
DO (RATTA)
DO!
DO
KA
KA
KA
KIKIN (KCHING)
KA (TAK)

!!?
GURA (LURCH)
ドゴォ
DOGAA (KWAAAN)
WHOA !!

BA-
(WHOOSH)
GOT HIM!
WHA—?
KA
(CHIAK)

GIN
(SHANG)
...I CAN'T LET YOU DO THIS...
HRNG!

GIN
GIN
BO
(FWOOM)
TA
(RAT) TA
TA
CHA
(CHAK)

GA
GA
GA (GRAK)
Aah...
sniff...
WHAT'S WRONG !?
Aaah...
Sob...
Aaah...
CAN YOU HEAR ME!?
I CAN'T...
...DO IT ANY-MORE...
WHAT !?
?

I CAN'T DO IT ANY-MORE!
I CAN'T SEE ANY-THING! I CAN'T READ THE FUTURE!
IF THAT BOMB GOES OFF, I...I...
SHE CAN'T READ THE FUTURE ???
TRUE, HE'S UP AGAINST JESUS, AEGIS AND ALL THE TRUMPS... PLUS THE HANDICAP OF THE BOMB AND HOSTAGES
HIS ONLY ALLY IS ME, WITH A BUSTED VAN ..
AND IF EVEN HARUKA'S FORESIGHT ISN'T WORKING ...

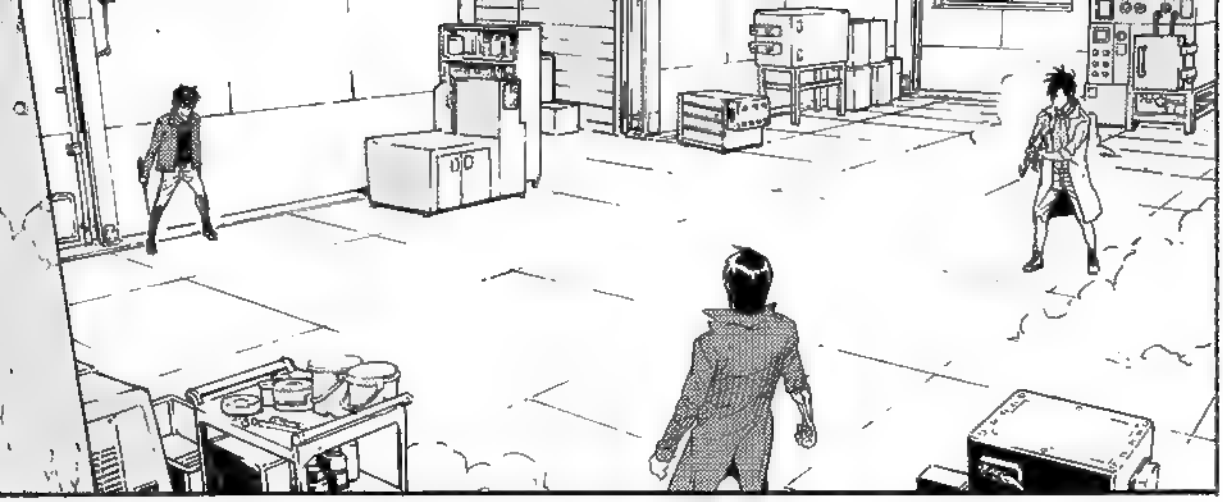
You're up against Sensei and Tate-san, with the enemy all around...
Every-one's going to die!
WE'RE GOING TO DIE !!
GAH...

OF COURSE SHE'D REACT THIS WAY.
SHE WAS A GIRL FROM A NORMAL HOME JUST FOUR MONTHS AGO...
Then just give up...
Give in to your despair and wait for death.
BUT!
ALL RIGHT.

WAAAAAH!!
AAH... WAAH ...

I HAVEN'T MASTERED EVERYTHING YET!
BUT I'M GONNA SURVIVE.

Y...
YOU MEAN...?

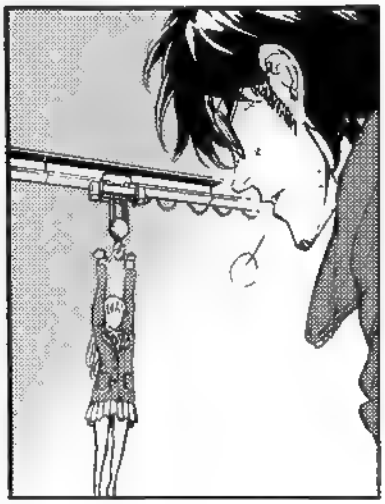


...

...

I THOUGHT I WARNED YOU.
IF YOU TURN YOUR BLADE ON ME, ONE OF US WILL DIE...

?
First things first...



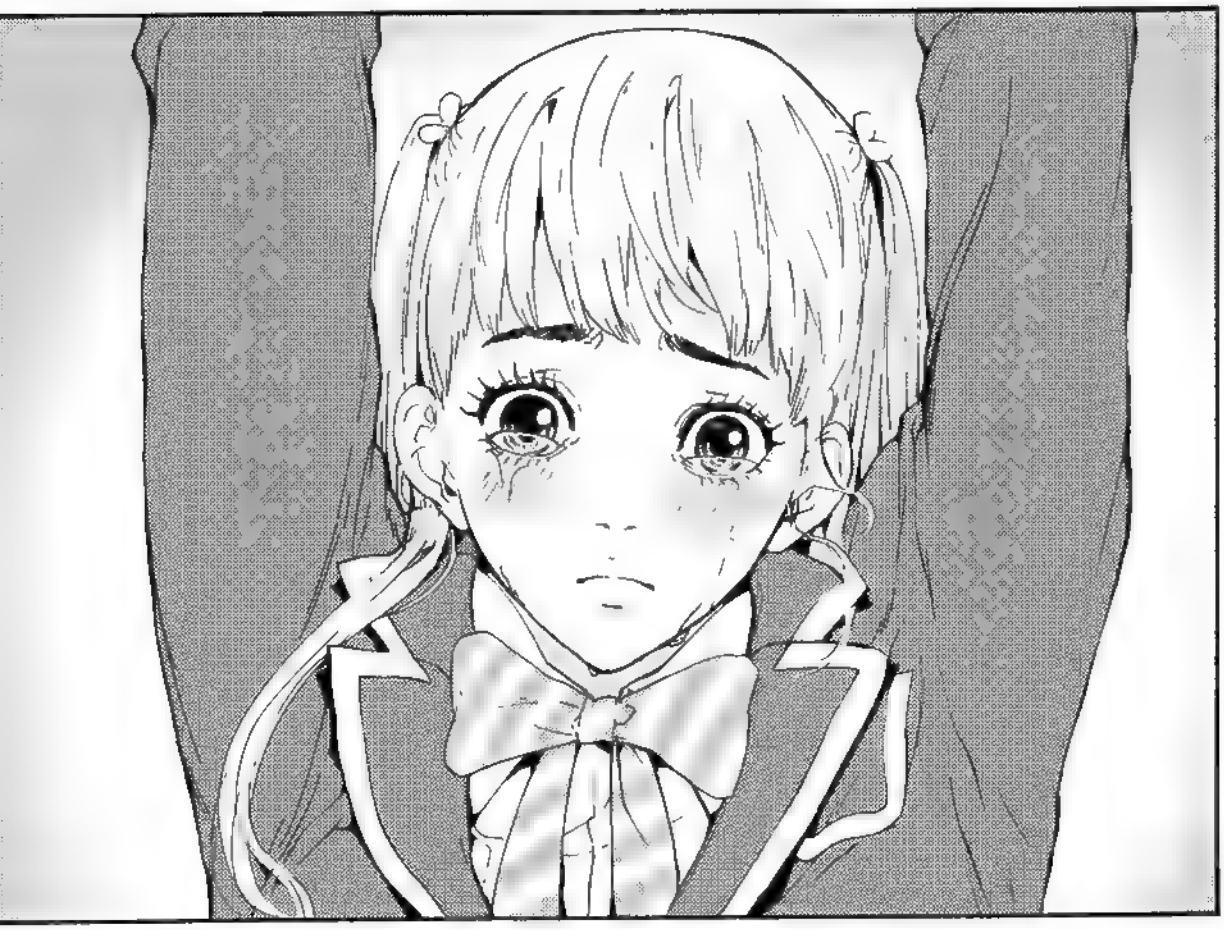
IF YOU INTEND TO BE MY WIFE ONE DAY...
...THEN DON'T GET DESPON-DENT OVER EVERY LITTLE THING!!

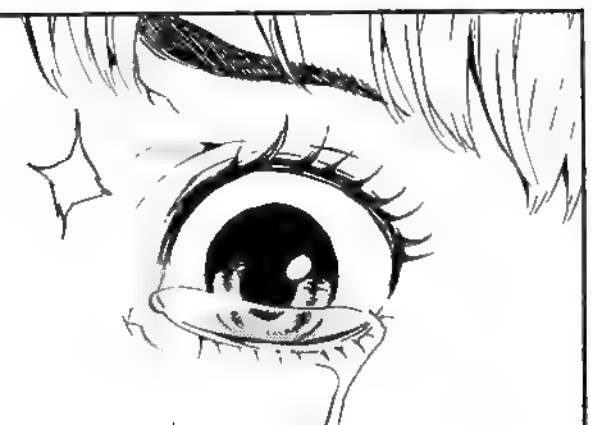
NO BIG-GIE ...
MAMO... WH-WHY...?
...

"UNTIL DEATH DO US PART."
BUT I REMEMBER THE FIRST THING YOU SAID TO ME.

...
...it was only natural that I'd come to that specific conclusion.
When I went back and considered that those were the words of someone who could see the future...

AM I WRONG !?





...IF WE SURVIVE THIS ONE...
WELL...

...I'M YOURS.

Until
Death
do us
Part

Art Staff
Suri ♀: Chief Assistant
0-Second ♂: Background Art
Taurus ♀: Background Art

Military Advisor
Lee Hyun Seok (warmania)
Oh Se Chan

Special Thanks
Shingo Takano

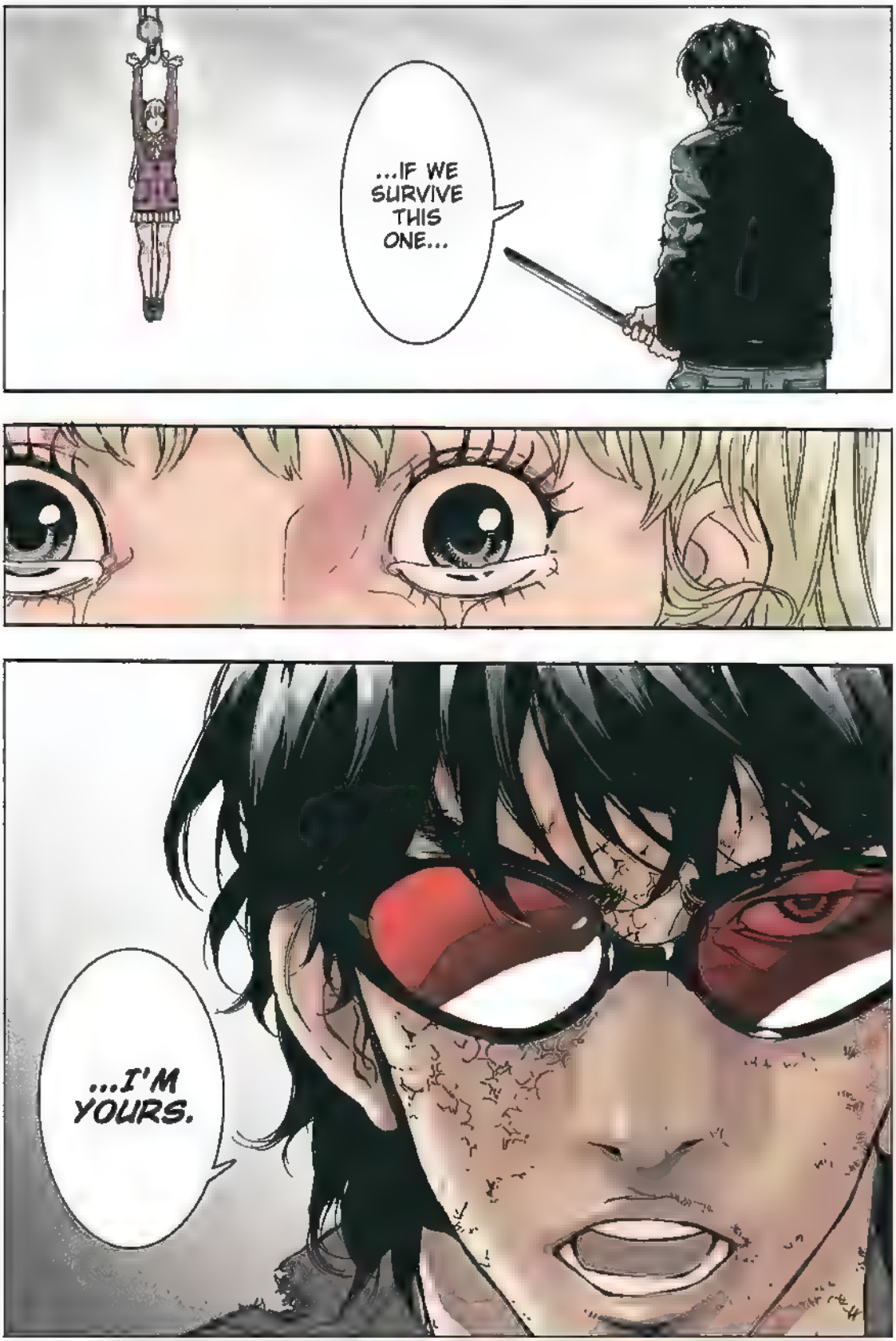
Crossover Planning
JESUS——Sajin Kouro, Yami no Aegis, Akatsuki no Aegis
Written by Kyouichi Nanatsuki, Art by Yoshihide Fujiwara (Shogakukan)

Design Assistance
Hitoshi Fukuchi

Until
Death
do us
Part

Until
Death
do us
Part

Until Death do us Part


...IF WE SURVIVE THIS ONE...
...I'M YOURS.

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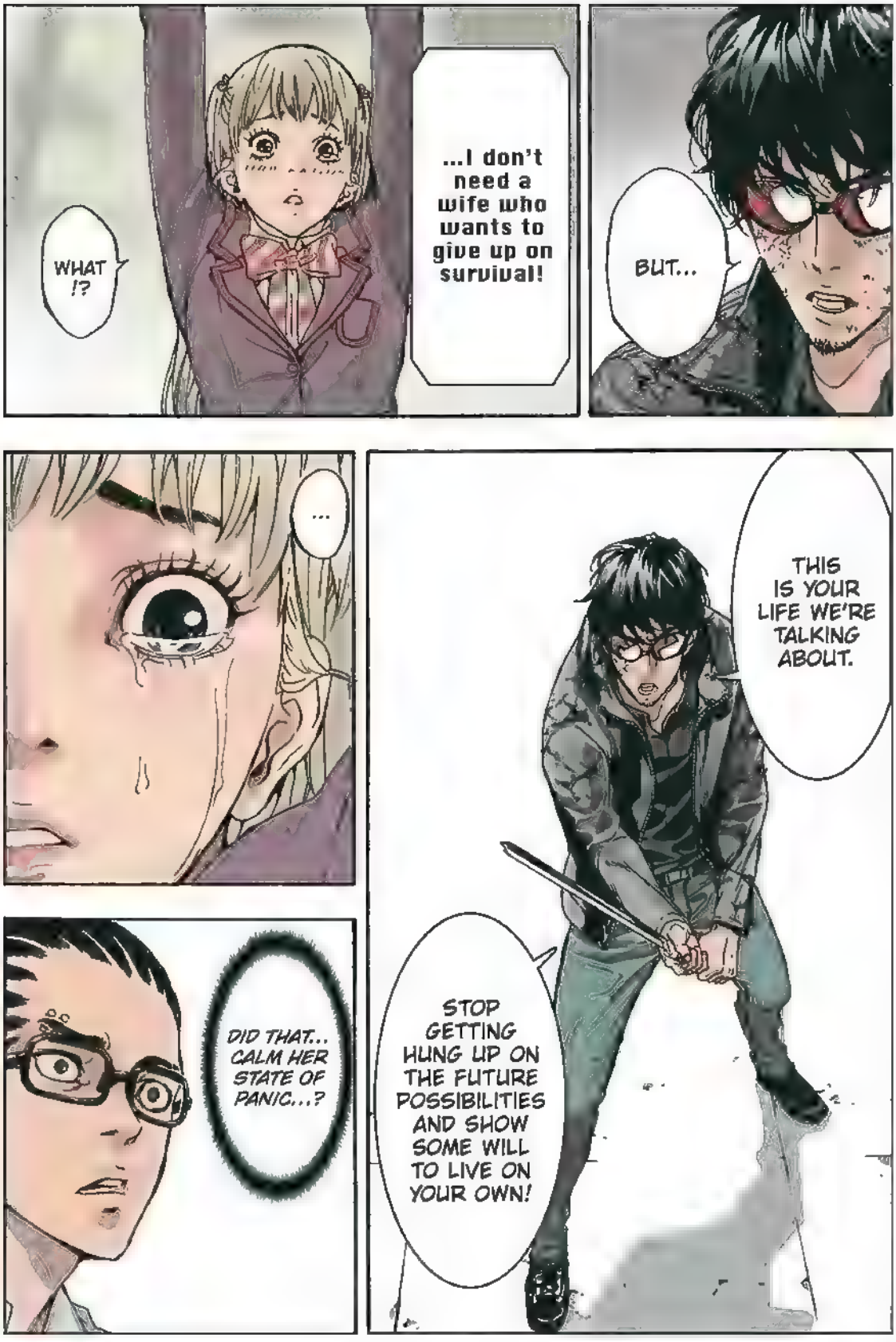
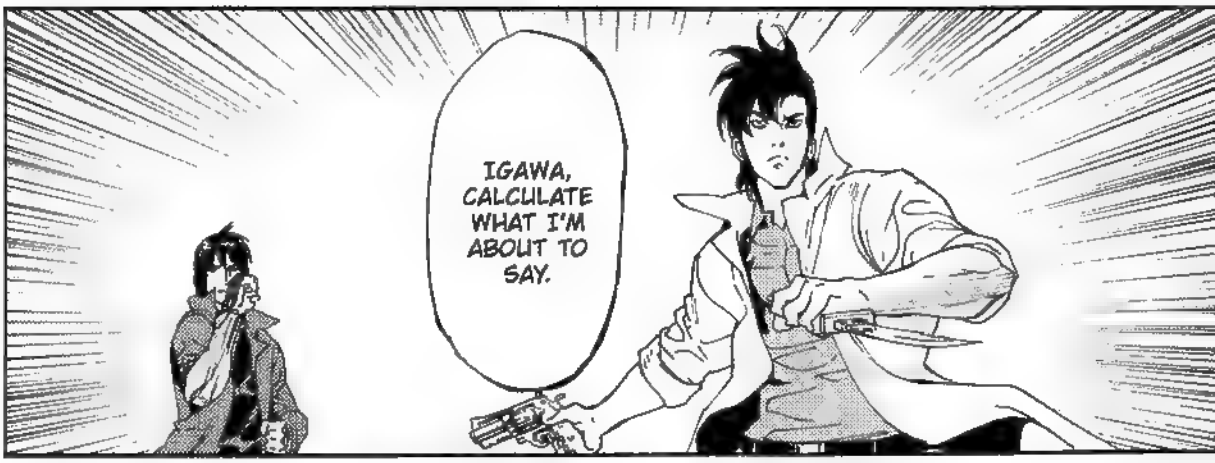

WHAT !?
...I don't need a wife who wants to give up on survival!
BUT...
...
THIS IS YOUR LIFE WE'RE TALKING ABOUT.
STOP GETTING HUNG UP ON THE FUTURE POSSIBILITIES AND SHOW SOME WILL TO LIVE ON YOUR OWN!
DID THAT... CALM HER STATE OF PANIC...?

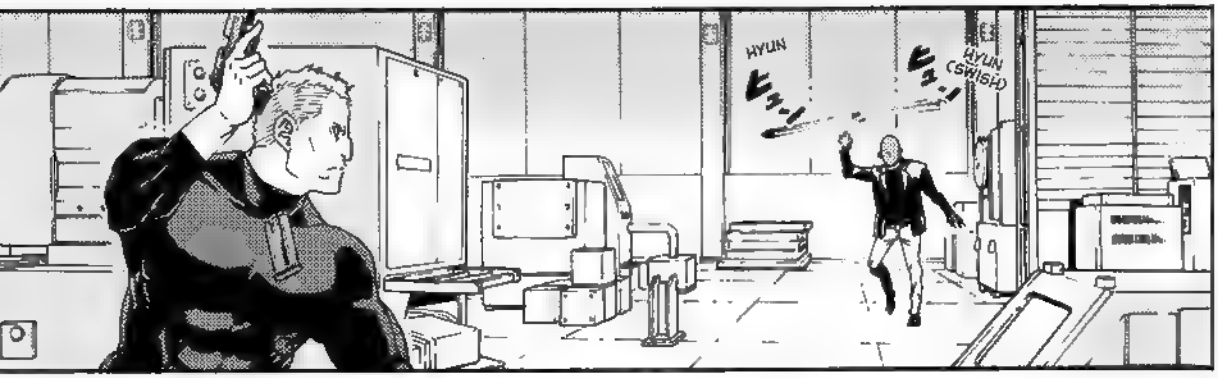
WHAT ARE THEY TALKING ABOUT AT A TIME LIKE THIS!?
GASHA (CLUNK)
ガシャ
IT WILL BE DIFFICULT TO GET OUT OF THIS ONE, BUT NOT IMPOSSIBLE.
BUT THAT OPPORTUNITY WON'T PRESENT ITSELF UNTIL WE START BUILDING POSITIVE MOMENTUM.
MAMORU-SAN...
SU (SHH)
ス...

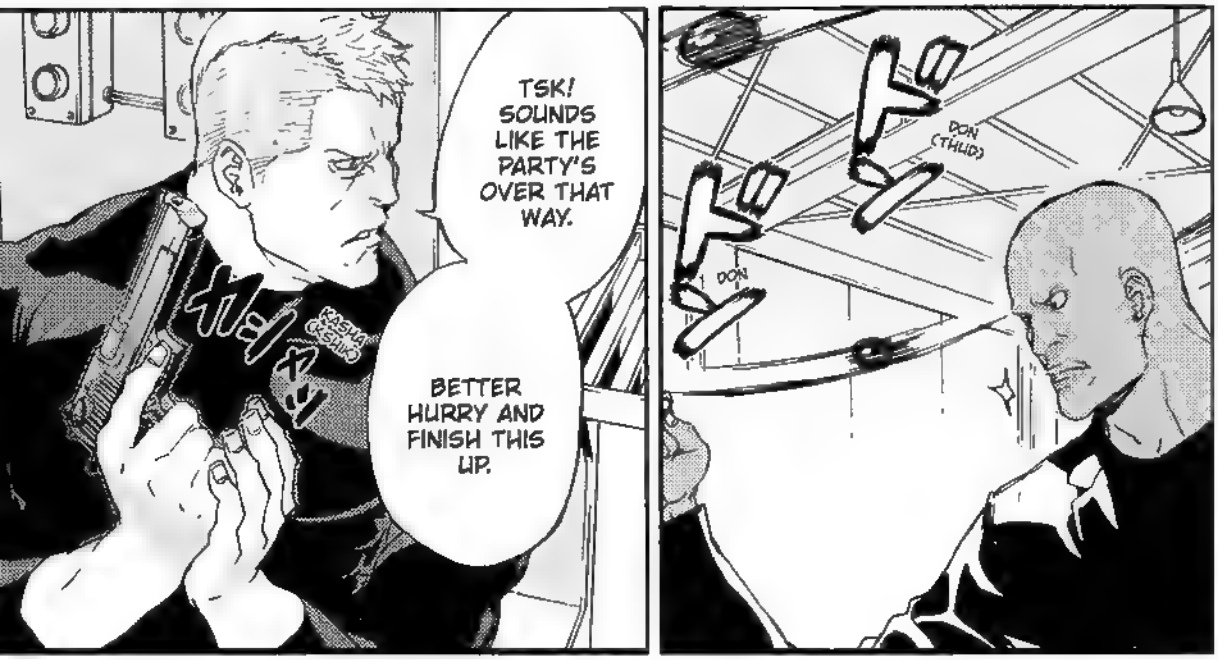
HARUKA, REPORT ON EVERYTHING YOU SEE HAPPENING BEYOND THAT GLASS WINDOW. I CAN'T SEE THROUGH IT.
I...I UNDER-STAND...
Just focus on doing every-thing you can to get us out of here!
...GOT IT...


IGAWA, CALCULATE WHAT I'M ABOUT TO SAY.

ONCE WE GET THE CHANCE, I'M PUTTING THIS INTO MOTION!!

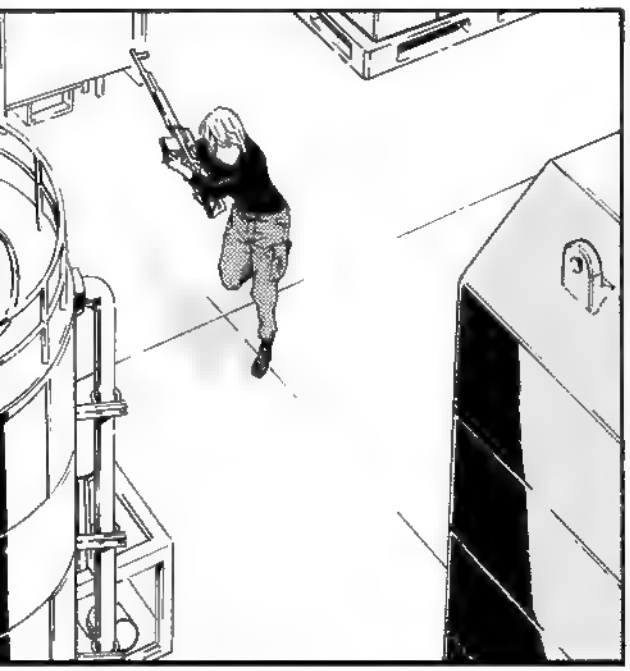
THE ONLY WAY OUT OF THIS IS TO CIRCLE AROUND FROM OUTSIDE AND FREE THE TWO GIRLS.
WE'RE TOTALLY TRAPPED IN THIS SITUATION.

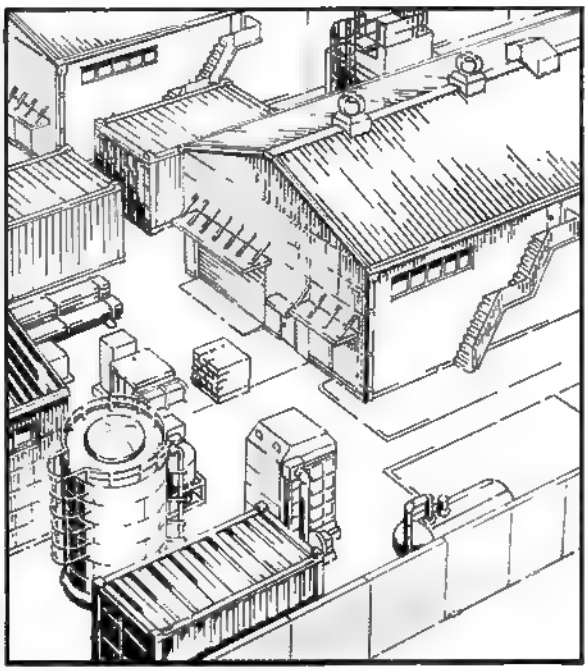

HYUN
HYUN (SWISH)


TSK! SOUNDS LIKE THE PARTY'S OVER THAT WAY.
BETTER HURRY AND FINISH THIS UP.
KASHA (CRASH)
DON (THUD)
DON

!?
WHAT'S THAT...?
BA (WHOOSH)
カッ KA
カッ KA (THUK)
カッ KA
YOU'RE HERE TOO!?

ドゥ
ドゥ
ドゥ
DON
(BLAM)
DON
DON
I'VE BEEN HOPING TO MEET YOU!





LEAVING THE WOUNDED MAN TO FIGHT ME—I'M INSULTED.

IN A DRAWN OUT BATTLE, I HAVE A MAJOR ADVANTAGE, BUT TIME IS OF THE ESSENCE TO RESCUE THE GIRLS.
THE PROBLEM IS, THESE IRREGULAR ATTACKS FORCE YOU TO KEEP YOUR DISTANCE... EXACTLY WHAT I DON'T WANT TO DO.

GACHA (CLICK)
カチャ

WHAT SHOULD I DO?
タン
TA (TEK)

A WHITE WOMAN WITH A RIFLE!?
THE ELEMENT NET-WORK?
OH NO! NOT NOW!!
GET DOWN!!
WATCH OUT!
BA (LEAP)

SWISHHH
(WHSSH)

WHOEVER YOU ARE, IF YOU DON'T WANT TO BE INVOLVED, GET OUT OF HERE!!
HE THROWS INVISIBLE BOOMER-ANGS!!

KA
(THUK)
H-HEY!

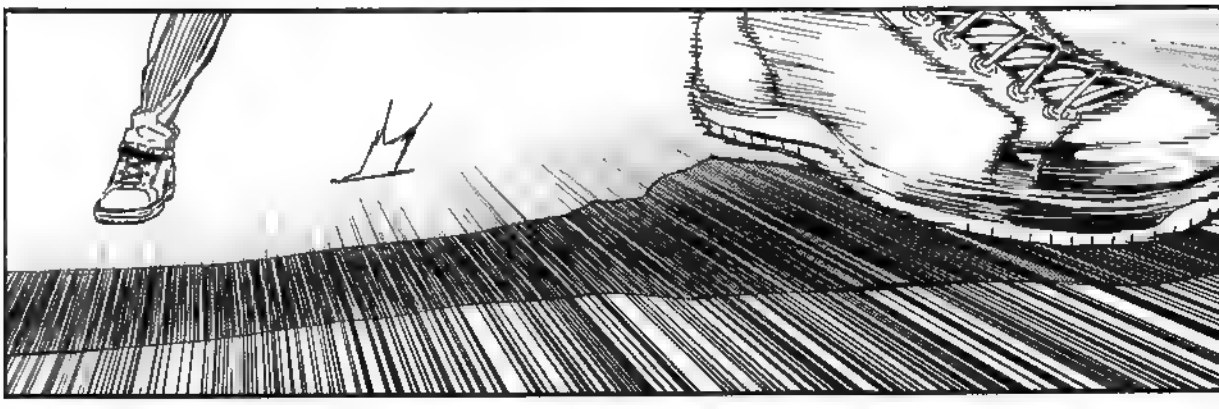
...!!

I'VE GOTTA DEAL WITH HER.
MOVE IT, JAP...
...
DIDN'T YOU HEAR ME? I DON'T GOT MUCH PATIENCE AT THE MOMENT.
AND I DON'T WANT TROUBLE ...
GU CCLENCH
YOU SCUM...
KID-NAPPING TEENAGE GIRLS TO FURTHER YOUR AIMS...

...WHAT ARE YOU DOING!?
DAMN... THIS GUY WANTS TO GO TOO?
I ORDERED IT TO USE AGAINST HIJIKATA...
IT'S A SPECIAL ORDER THREE-PART CARBON FIBER BATON.
ジャキッ
JAKI (SHIKK)

...
AMATEUR!
...I'M WILLING TO MAKE AN EXCEPTION FOR YOU.
BUT IN THIS CASE ...
HE LOOKS COOL AS A CUCUMBER... ISN'T HE WORRIED ABOUT HIS PARTNER!?
...
DON (BLAM)

...
THE ONE TRULY IN DANGER OF HER LIFE IS ANNA RIDDLE, NOT TOOYAMA.



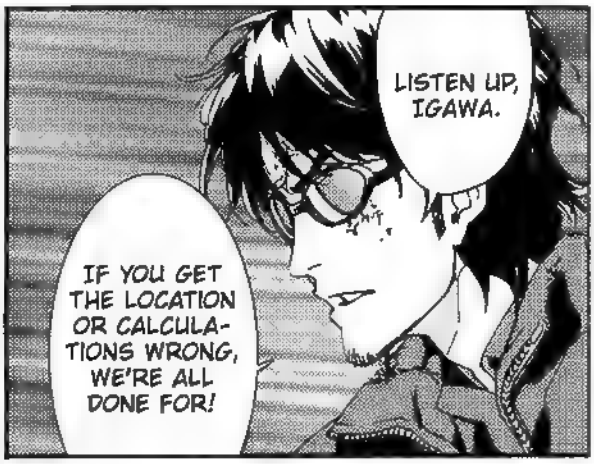
BUN
(WHOOSH)

NO WIND-UP!?

!?
KIN (TING)

EVEN WITHOUT FORMAL TRAINING, THEY LEARN THE WAYS OF COMBAT NATURALLY THROUGH EXPERI-ENCE.
DAMN, THIS GUY'S A PAIN IN THE ASS. THAT'S THE THING ABOUT VETERAN FIGHTERS ...
HE BROUGHT IT BACK TO CATCH THE BLADE !?

NOW IT'S YOUR TURN TO BE SURPRISED.
GUGUGU (HRRG)


LISTEN UP, IGAWA.
IF YOU GET THE LOCATION OR CALCULA-TIONS WRONG, WE'RE ALL DONE FOR!

I-I KNOW, MAN!

DA
(DASH)
BUO
(WHOOSH)
CHI
(TIKK)

YOU THINK THAT'S ENOUGH?

BUN
(WHOOSH)

IS HE AIMING AT SOME-THING?

TA
(TEK)
タッ
タッ

HE GUIDED HIS OPPONENT INTO THE TRAJECTORY OF THE SWORD HE THREW!?

SORRY TO INTERRUPT.
WHO ASKED YOU TO DO THAT!?
NOW, IGAWA !!

Until
Death
do us
Part

AT NO TIME IS THE FUTURE EVER SET IN STONE.
PARTICU-LARLY IN THIS TENSE SITUATION, WITH MANY VOLATILE FACTORS IN PLAY...
...EVEN HARUKA TOOYAMA, WITH HER POWERS OF FORESIGHT, COULD NOT SEE WHAT MIGHT ENSUE.

OR, TO PUT IT ANOTHER WAY...

...ANY FUTURE WAS CURRENTLY WITHIN THE REALM OF POSSIBILITY.

SUCH WERE THE STAKES IN WHICH THESE MEN RISKED THEIR LIVES.

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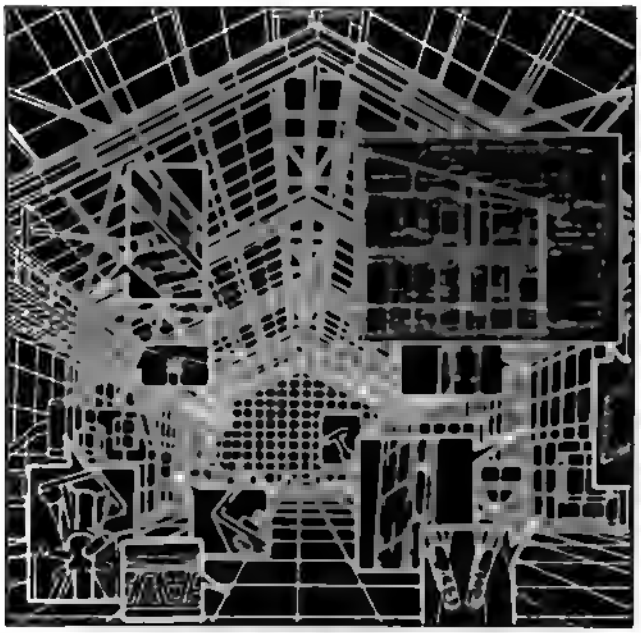
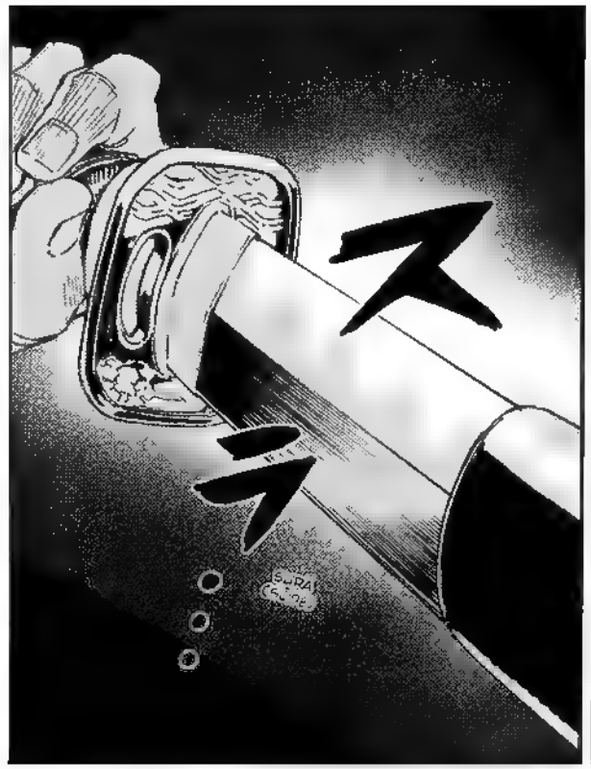


SENDING DATA NOW!

I'm hittin' it!
DRIVE...

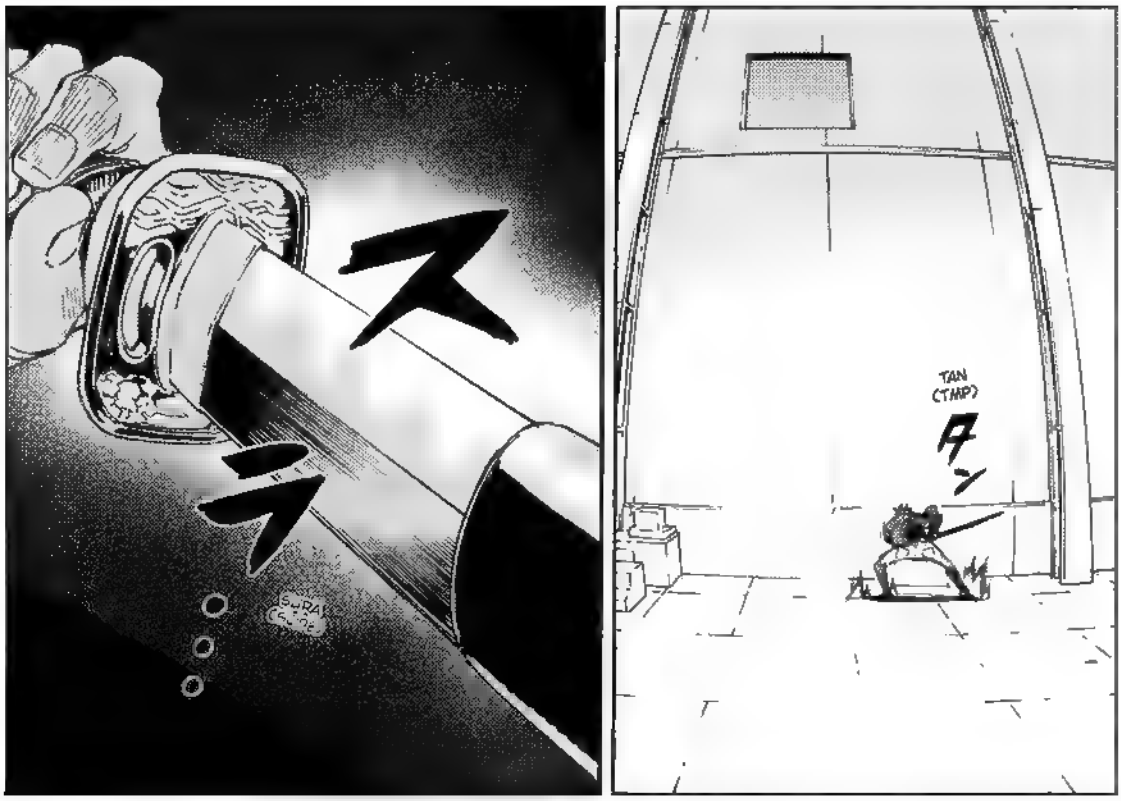
パシャ
PASHA (PSHOO)
ウィィィン
UIIN (VHRS)
A"
DA (DASH)
!?

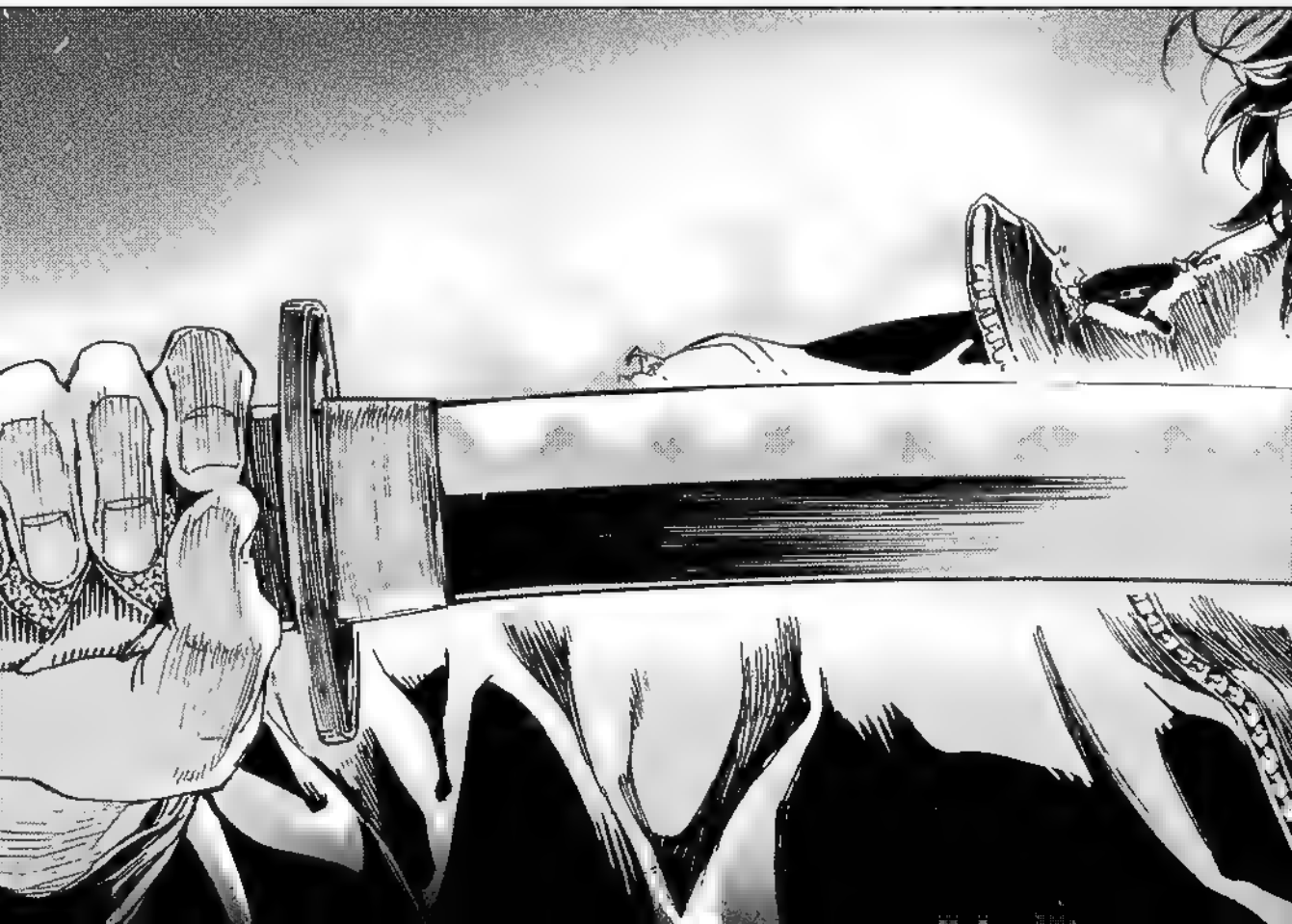

SURA
(SLICE)

TAN
(TMP)

BA
(SNATCH)

BA
(SNATCH)


スー
ラ
BURA (LA-ZE)
TAN (TMP)
タン



WHAT IS HE DOING!?

NRRAAH!!
HE CAN'T —!!
THERE HE GOES!

ズズズズ
ZU-ZU-ZU-ZU (ZARD)

WHA—!?

YAAAAAH!!

YAAAAAHH!!

ズ
ズ
ズ
ズ
WHA
—!?

GURA
(LURCH)
EYAAA
!!
DODOH
(DADOOM)

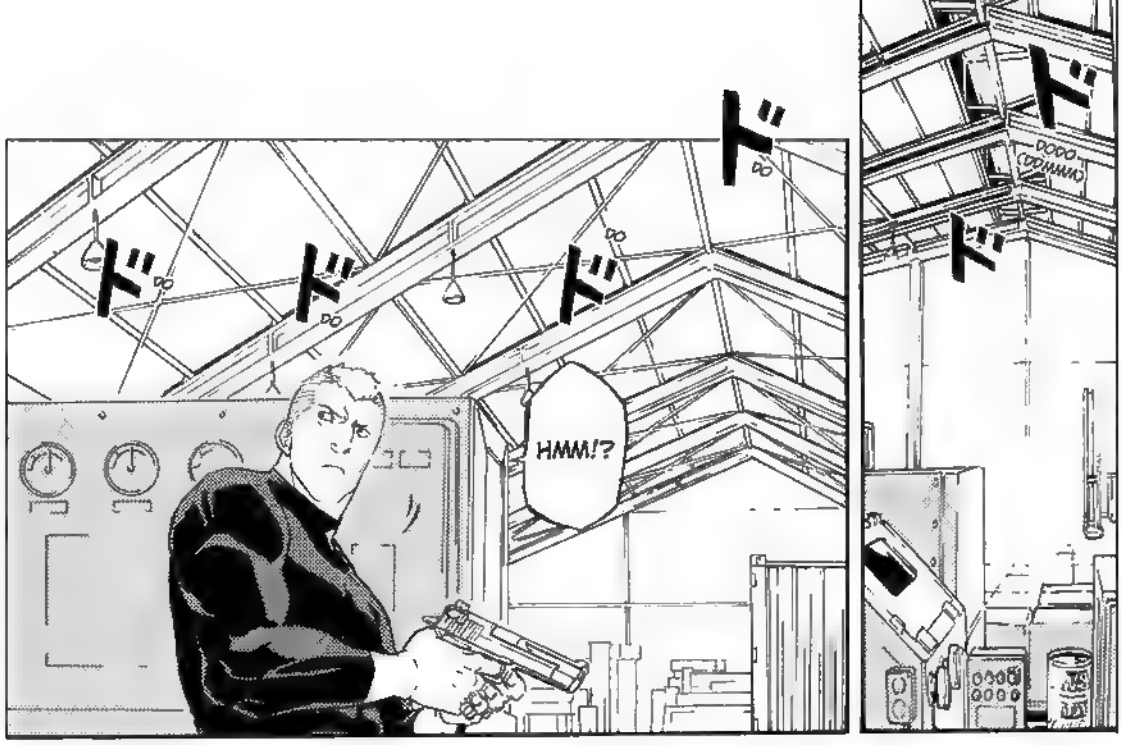
ドカ
(THUMP)
WHOA!
カ
ダ
(ZIP)
ヴ
OH
NO!!

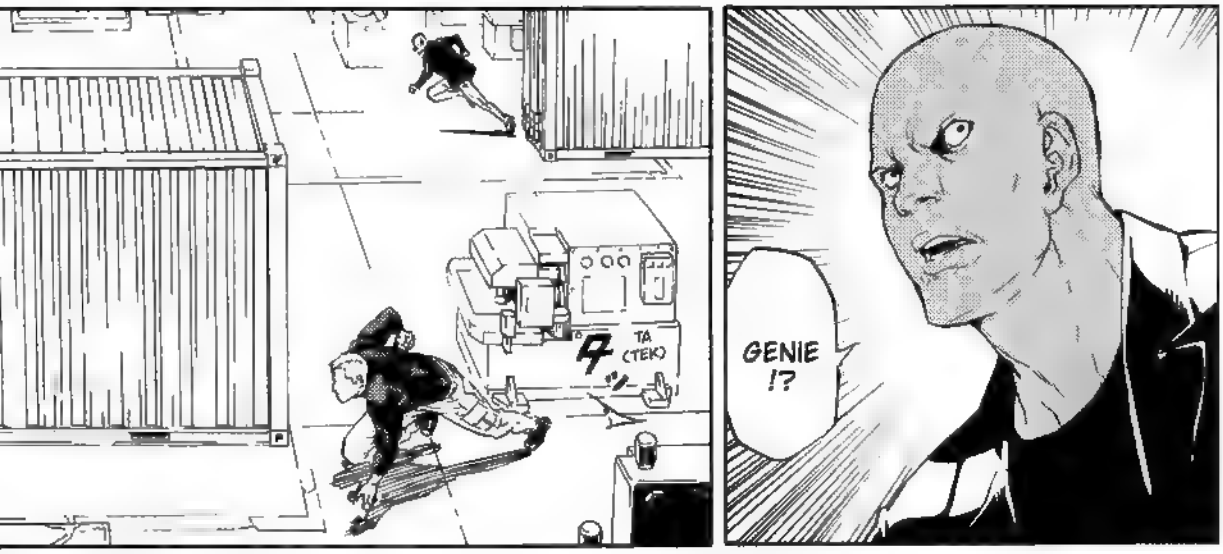
KITAGAMI-SAN!?
(BA (LEAP)

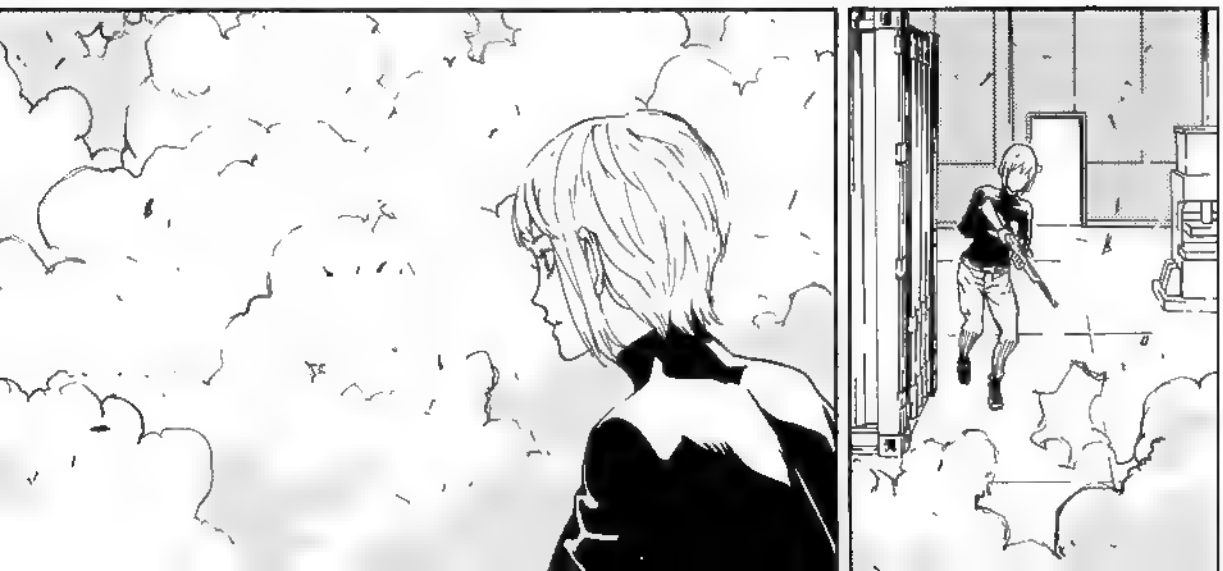
KURU (SPIN)
UGH!
DO
DO
DO
DODODO (DRAMA)
?
WHAT WAS THAT!?
BA (WHOOSH)
NOT SO FAST!
HI-YAH!

!?
DON'T STEP WHERE YOU DON'T BELONG, AMATEUR.
BUSHUU (BSSHTT)

GREAT, A COP...
I MIGHT BE AN AMATEUR AT KILLING, BUT I AM A PROFESSIONAL POLICEMAN.
OH, BUT THAT IS MY JOB.

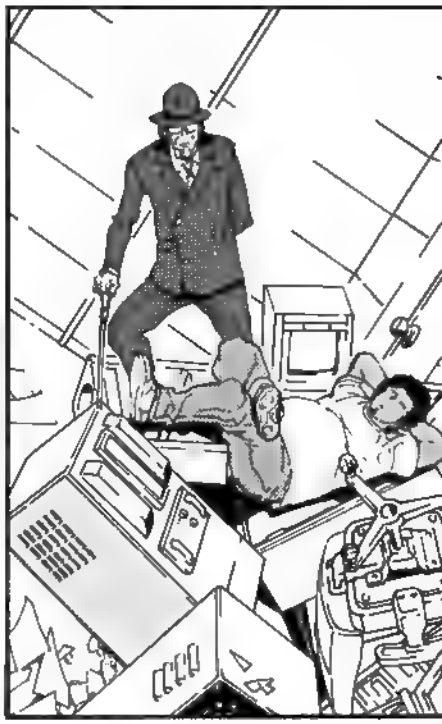

ド
ド
ド
ド
ド
HMM!?


TA
(TEK)
GENIE
!?

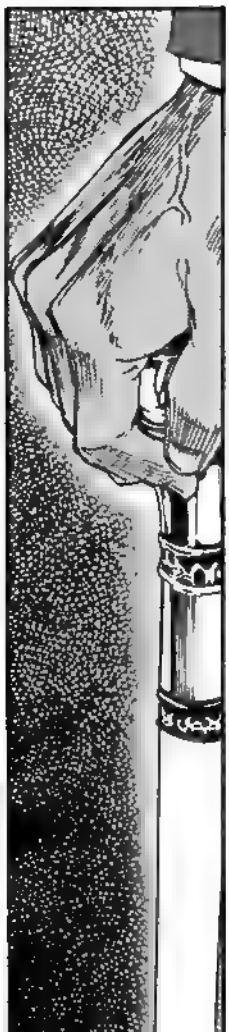


...
AT LEAST THEY'RE BOTH ALL RIGHT...

WHAT NOW, ZELM?
WITH THE SAMURAI'S EXPLOSIVE CURRENTLY SET TO IGNORE COMMANDS, YOU CAN'T BLOW HIM WITH THE SWITCH ON HAND.



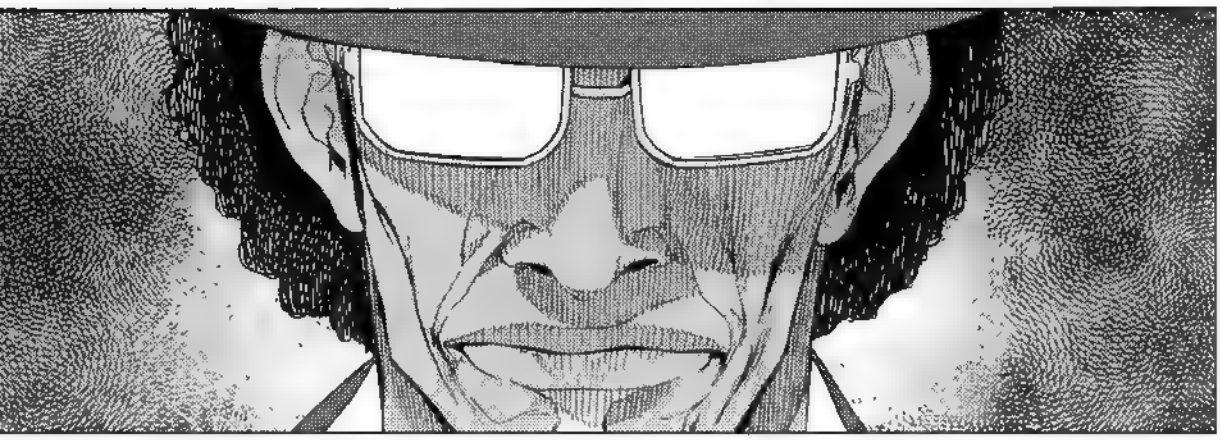
I WILL SETTLE THIS MYSELF.



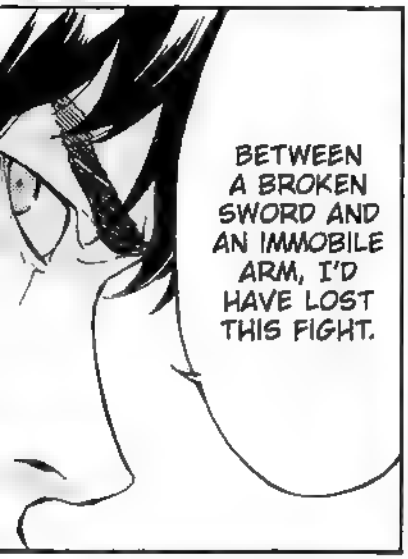
YOU DIDN'T SET THIS GAME UP HOPING FOR THIS TO HAPPEN, DID YOU?
...OF COURSE NOT...

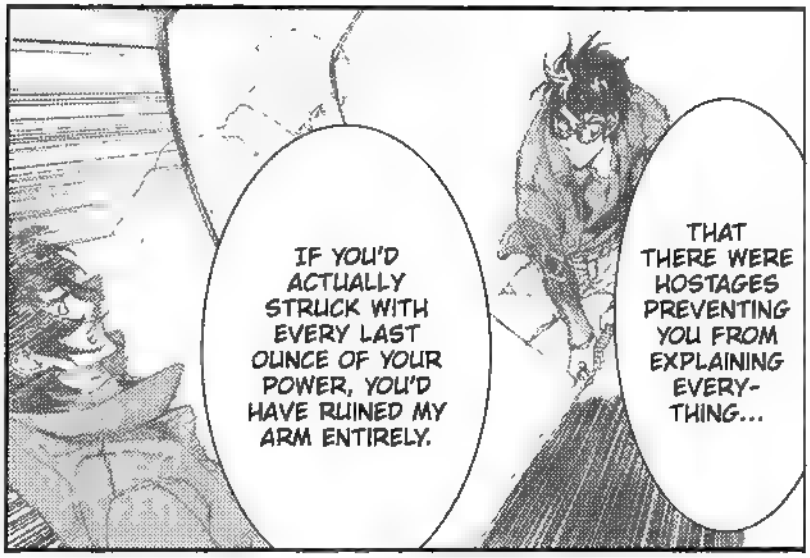
...OF COURSE NOT...
ALL AD-LIBBED.
DID YOU HAVE THAT ALL PLANNED OUT?

...
GARA
...
SUU
(SWO)
スウ
(PUSHUU
(PSHH?)
プシュウ



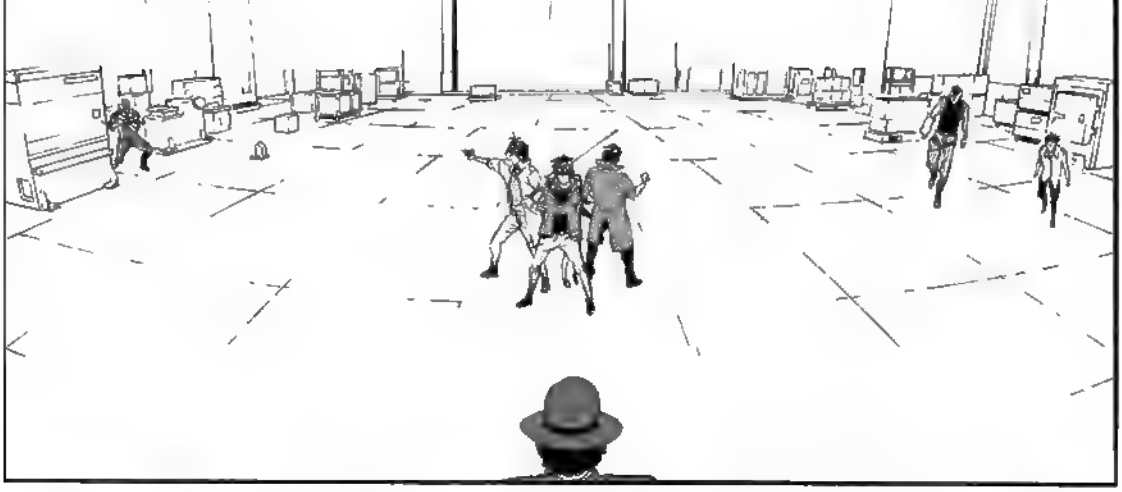
THAT'S WHEN I KNEW WHAT YOU WERE DOING.
HIJIKATA'S BEST IAI ATTACK WAS JUST A FEW CENTIMETERS SHORT.
JUST SUBTLE ENOUGH THAT ONLY THE COMBATANTS WOULD REALIZE IT.

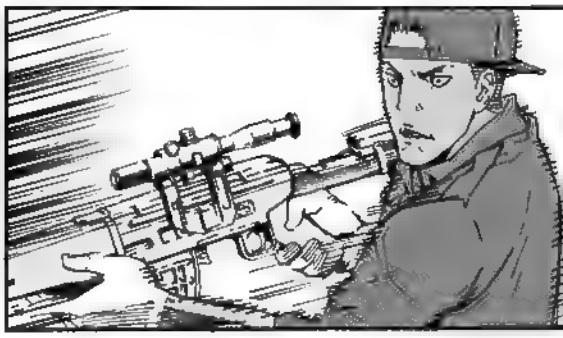

BETWEEN A BROKEN SWORD AND AN IMMOBILE ARM, I'D HAVE LOST THIS FIGHT.

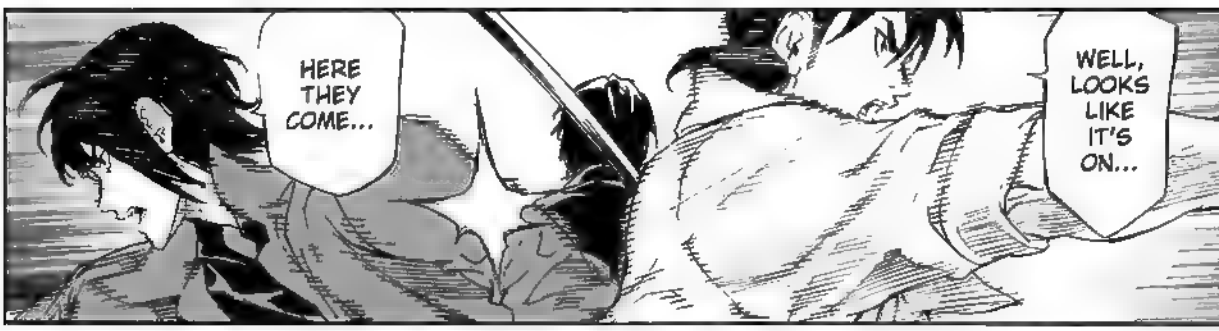

IF YOU'D ACTUALLY STRUCK WITH EVERY LAST OUNCE OF YOUR POWER, YOU'D HAVE RUINED MY ARM ENTIRELY.
THAT THERE WERE HOSTAGES PREVENTING YOU FROM EXPLAINING EVERY-THING...

YOU LUNATIC!

NAH, THIS MAKES A ONE-ONE TIE.
IF THERE *IS* A NEXT TIME, WE CAN SETTLE THE SCORE THEN.






HERE THEY COME...
WELL, LOOKS LIKE IT'S ON...

LET'S GO!

Until
Death
do us
Part

...
SHE JUMPED FROM THAT HEIGHT WITHOUT A SECOND THOUGHT...

LET'S GO!!
I ASK THIS NOT JUST OF HIJIKATA-SAN...
!?
WAIT A MOMENT!

...BUT OF YOU TOO, SENSEI. CAN YOU DEFEAT THE ENEMY WITHOUT KILLING?
WHAT !?

chapter 141

IF SHE KNOWS THAT SOMEONE DIED BECAUSE OF HER, THE GUILT WILL HANG OVER HER FOR THE REST OF HER LIFE.
YOUR STUDENT IS WATCHING.
I'VE NEVER BEEN THAT HUNG UP ABOUT THE LITTLE THINGS BEFORE.
OH, SHUT UP...
WHAT ARE YOU GONNA DO!?
IN THAT CASE, LEAVE THIS TO ME.
SU (SHA)
ス"

I'M GOING TO PAY THEM BACK WHAT I OWE.
H-HEY!

I SEE...
MAN, HOW MUCH DOES THAT GUY HATE TO LOSE?
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
THESE ARE ALL THE GUYS HE FOUGHT AGAINST AT THE SCHOOL.
HE WANTS A REMATCH WITH THEM.
I KNOW YOU CAN DEACTIVATE THE EXPLOSIVE THEY STRAPPED TO HER.
ALL RIGHT.
IN THAT CASE, *SENSEI*, PLEASE HANDLE THE OTHER TRUMPS—PARTICULARLY THE INVISIBLE ONE—WHEN THE FIGHT STARTS.
KARITO, YOU RESCUE TOOYAMA-SAN.
FINE... STUDENTS TAKE PRIORITY IN THIS CASE.

QUITE A COINCIDENCE THAT BRINGS YOU BACK HERE.
GOT A BIT MORE OF AN ADVANTAGE THAN BACK AT THE SCHOOL, BUT YOU DON'T MIND, DO YOU?
WHAT ARE YOU THINKING!?
I'M GOING TO PROVE I COULD'VE BEATEN YOU BACK THEN...
...TO YOUR BOSS, BEFORE I FIGHT HIM MYSELF.

コク
KOKU (NOD)
COCKY BASTARD.

WAIT.

スッ
SU (SHH)

TCH... IF THAT'S WHAT YOU WANT...

PASHU
(SHOOF)
THIS IS WHERE WE LEFT OFF, RIGHT?
WHEN DID HE—?

THIS ONE'S A TRUE BATTLE KATANA!
IT AIN'T LIKE THE RAZORS I'VE BEEN USING.
BETTER GET YOUR HEADS ON STRAIGHT.

SHUT THE FUCK UP!!
GIRI (CLENCH)
DA (DSHH)
IT'S JUST A BIT LONGER THAN USUAL, THAT'S ALL!
DAMN!
BA (LEAP)

OHH
...
HAAAH
!!
ZUGA
(SHUNK)

THIS CRAP CAN'T STOP MY BLADE!!
WHAT THE —!?
GUO (ZWOOM)
CHA (SHKK)
BÀ (WAPH)

SLIC
(WHOOSH)
THAT'S RIGHT.
A SWORD THAT LARGE WILL TAKE TOO LONG TO REACT AT CLOSE RANGE!

DOSU
(THUDD)
DAN
(STOMP)

DON
(WHAM)
ドガッ
DOGA
(THUMP)

GAAH
!!
!?
GASH
(SNAG)
DOSU
(SHUD)

ALL RIGHT, THAT DOES IT FOR THE OPENING ACT...
...!
THIS IS CRAZY!
HOW CAN YOU BE THAT MUCH BETTER !?
...

IT IS SIMPLY A MATTER OF EXPERIENCE WITH HIS WEAPON.

FWA HA HA HA HA HA!

YOU HAVE HAD FIVE YEARS, AT BEST.
BUT HE'S STUDIED HIS BLADE FOR CLOSE TO TWENTY YEARS, I EXPECT.

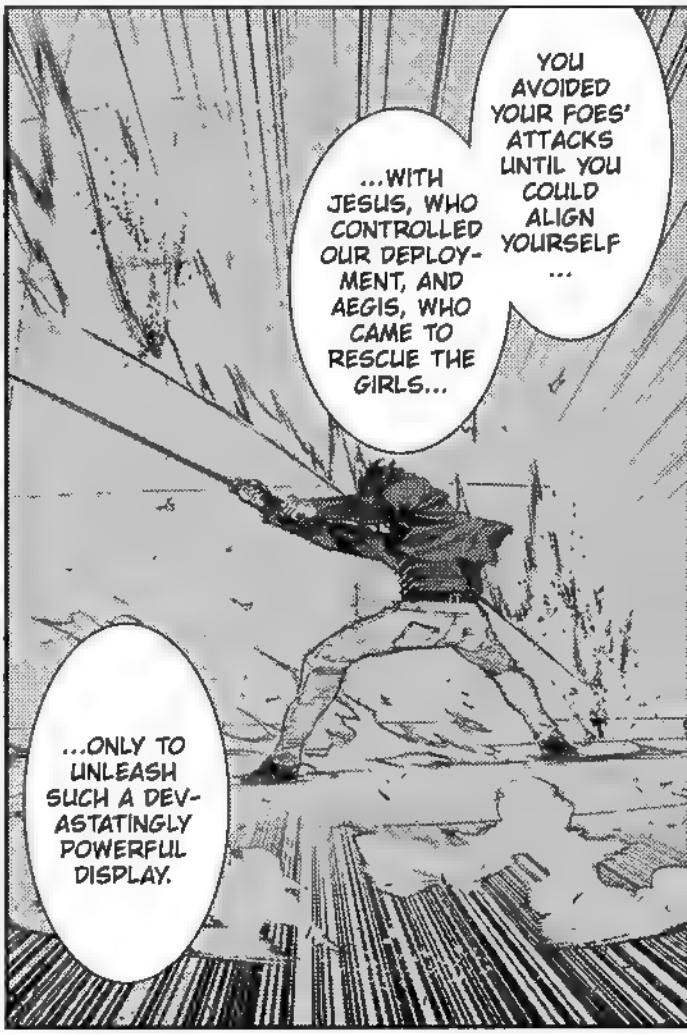
NOW STEP BACK.
IT IS MY TURN.
KA (THUNK)
カ

F-
FUCK
...
HNG
...
ZUBO
(SHLUK)
スボッ
KO
DON
(BLAM)
!?

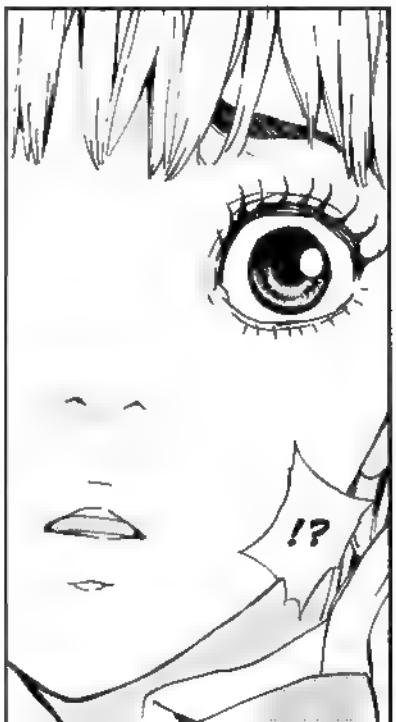
SHIN (STING)
...
EEEP!
SHIT!

WHAT DID I TELL YOU EARLIER!?
IF YOU DON'T LIKE MY ORDERS, YOU CAN KILL ME AND START CALLING THE SHOTS ANY-TIME YOU WANT!!
GAHK!
I...I'M SORRY, ZELM...
I APOLOGIZE FOR THE POOR TREATMENT, SAMURAI.
BUT I MUST ADMIT, I'M SURPRISED ...

I JUST HAVE ONE QUESTION.
...
DID YOU KNOW THE GIRL NAMED ANNA WOULD THROW HERSELF FROM SUCH A HEIGHT WITHOUT HESITATION?


YOU AVOIDED YOUR FOES' ATTACKS UNTIL YOU COULD ALIGN YOURSELF ...
...WITH JESUS, WHO CONTROLLED OUR DEPLOYMENT, AND AEGIS, WHO CAME TO RESCUE THE GIRLS...
...ONLY TO UNLEASH SUCH A DEVASTATINGLY POWERFUL DISPLAY.

IF SHE HAD HELD BACK EVEN AN IOTA, IT WOULD ALL HAVE BEEN FOR NAUGHT.


!?

SHE MIGHT BE YOUNG... BUT AEGIS CALLS HER A PARTNER.
I NEVER THOUGHT SHE'D SHY AWAY FROM WHAT NEEDED TO BE DONE.

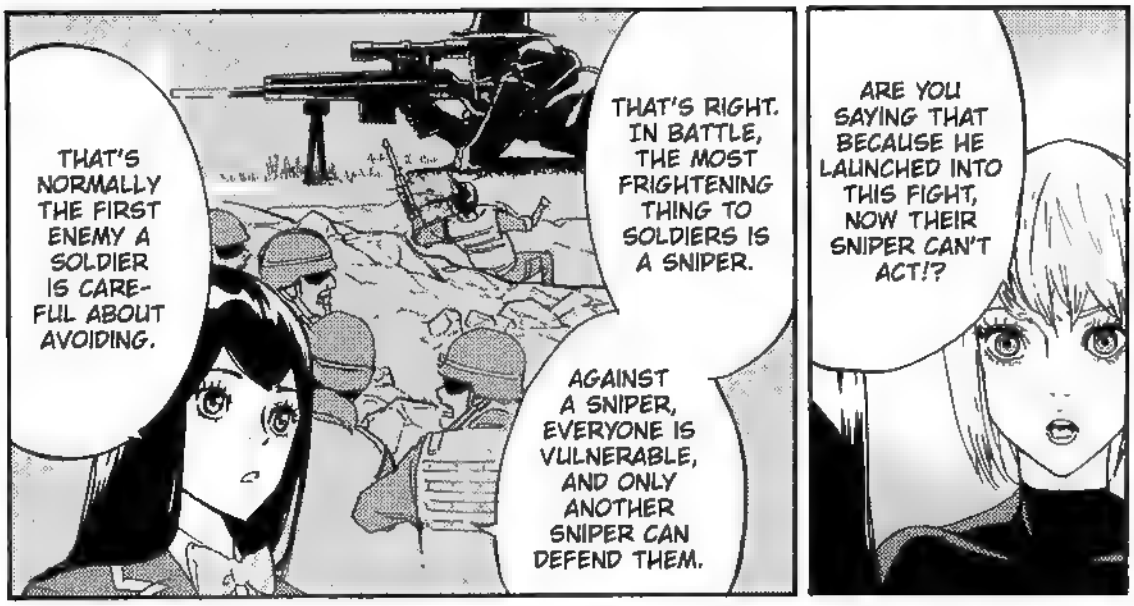
I BELIEVE SUN TZU SAID, "KNOW YOUR ENEMIES AND KNOW YOURSELF, AND YOU NEED NOT FEAR A HUNDRED BATTLES."
YOU ARE A MAN WITHOUT WEAK-NESS.
SO YOU DID YOUR HOME-WORK...
WE WERE BOUND TO SQUARE OFF. I HAD TO BE PREPARED FOR THE OUTCOME.
LET'S BEGIN.
NO NEED FOR MORE TALK.
...VERY WELL...

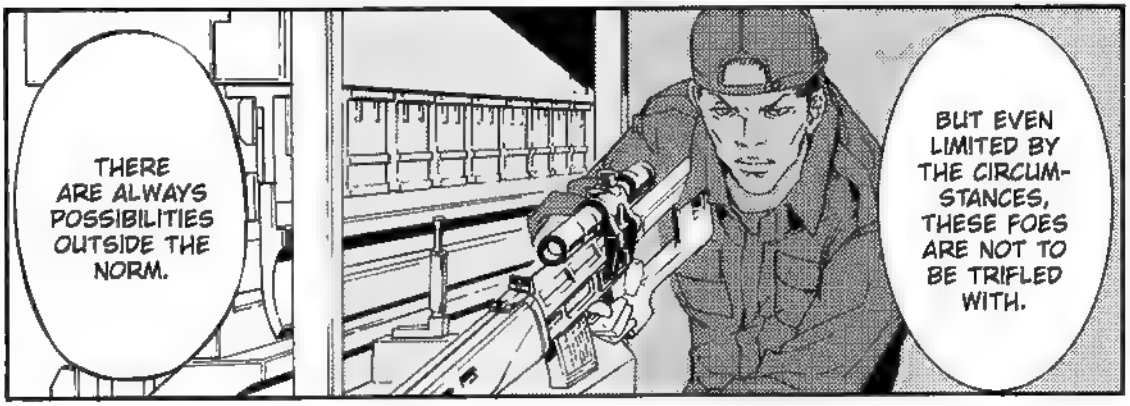
BUSHIU
(BBSHT?
!?

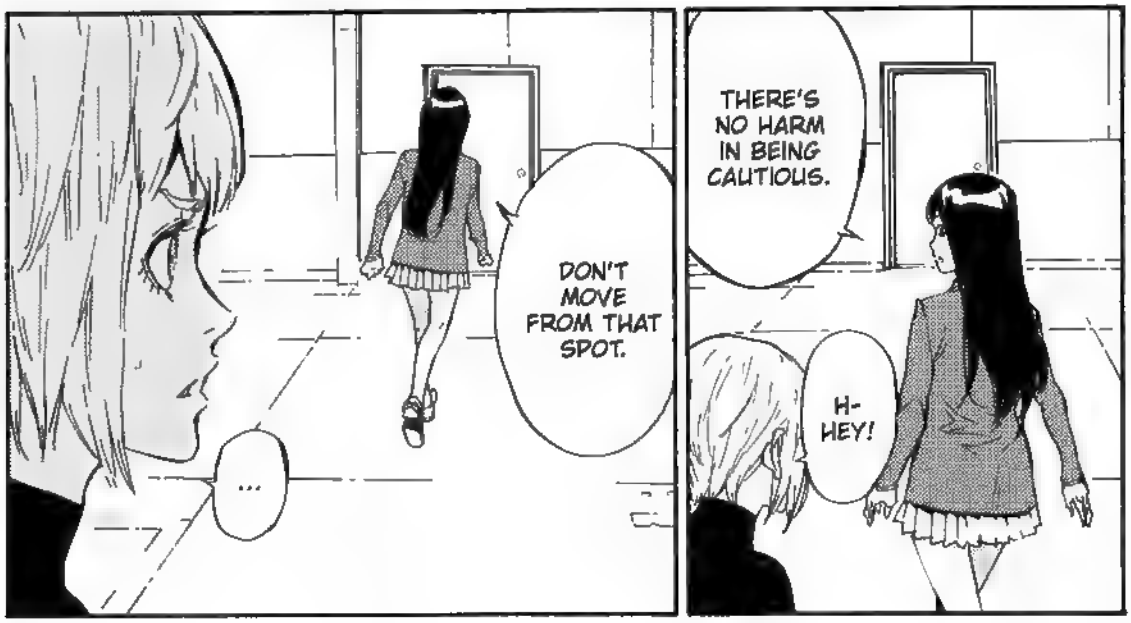
chapter 142

ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
I'M FINE. AND YOU?
THE BOOMER-ANG GUY IS ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THAT DOOR.
SINCE HE HASN'T COME THROUGH YET, I'D GUESS THE OTHER MAN IS KEEPING HIM BUSY.
!?
GENDA-SAN?
YOU KNOW HIM? LET'S GO HELP, THEN.

WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO DO?
NO.
I MUST ASK YOU TO PROVIDE MAMORU HIJIKATA WITH BACKUP.
IT CAN BE NOTHING MORE THAN A THREAT.
!?
IF A SNIPER'S POSITIONING IS NOT RIGHT, THEIR EFFECTIVENESS CAN DROP TO A FIFTH OF ITS POTENTIAL.
PRECISELY.
THANKS TO MAMORU HIJIKATA'S SCHEME, THE ENEMY SNIPER'S ABILITIES ARE SORELY LIMITED.
I SEE...
YOU'RE SAYING THAT APPLIES TO THE ENEMY, AS WELL?


THAT'S NORMALLY THE FIRST ENEMY A SOLDIER IS CARE-FUL ABOUT AVOIDING.
THAT'S RIGHT. IN BATTLE, THE MOST FRIGHTENING THING TO SOLDIERS IS A SNIPER.
AGAINST A SNIPER, EVERYONE IS VULNERABLE, AND ONLY ANOTHER SNIPER CAN DEFEND THEM.
ARE YOU SAYING THAT BECAUSE HE LAUNCHED INTO THIS FIGHT, NOW THEIR SNIPER CAN'T ACT!?

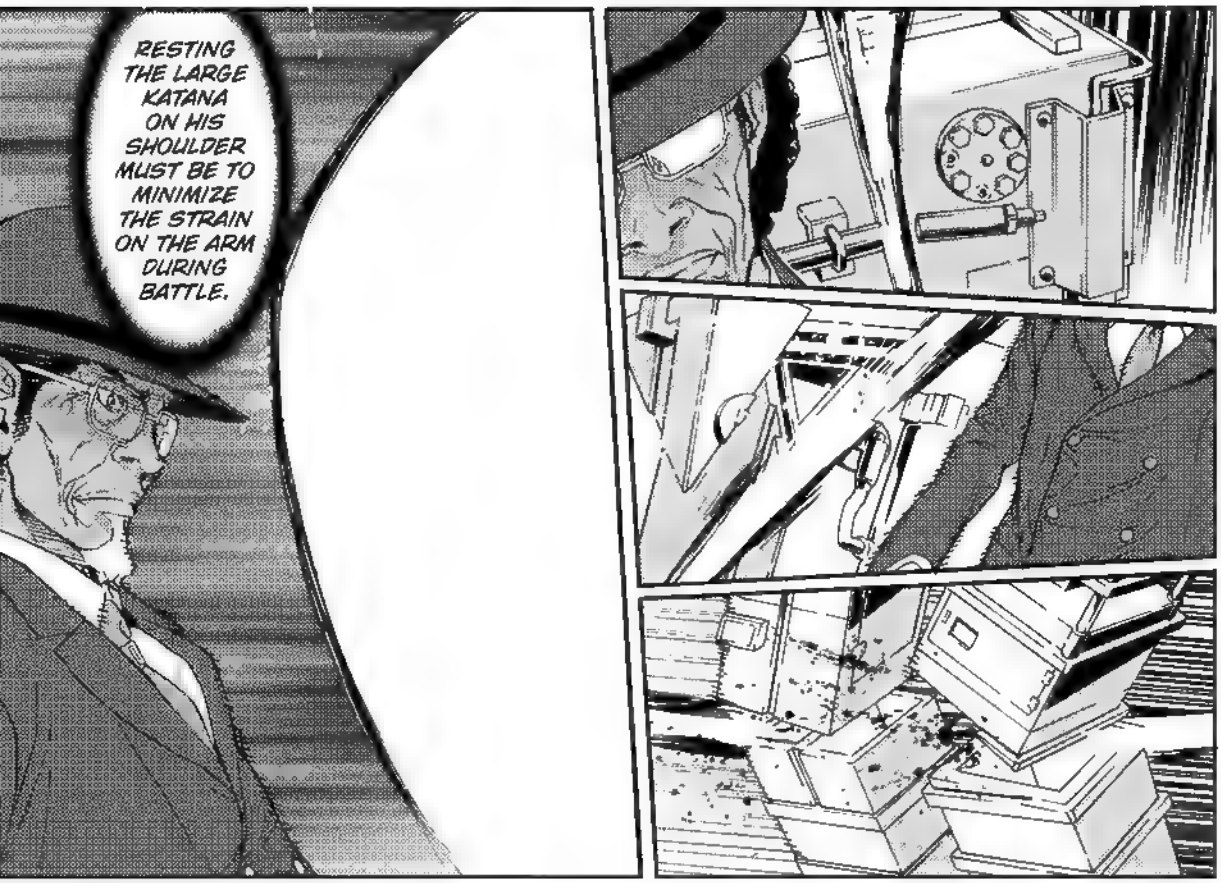

THERE ARE ALWAYS POSSIBILITIES OUTSIDE THE NORM.
BUT EVEN LIMITED BY THE CIRCUM-STANCES, THESE FOES ARE NOT TO BE TRIFLED WITH.


...
DON'T MOVE FROM THAT SPOT.
THERE'S NO HARM IN BEING CAUTIOUS.
H-HEY!

BUSHUU!
(BSSHT)
FRIGHT-FULLY GOOD INSTINCTS.
EVEN ON YOUR FIRST ENCOUNTER, YOU WERE ABLE TO AVOID THE FATAL BLOW...
...

ANOTHER ONE OF THOSE INVISIBLE WEAPONS ...
BLIO CWHOOSH
NRRN!!

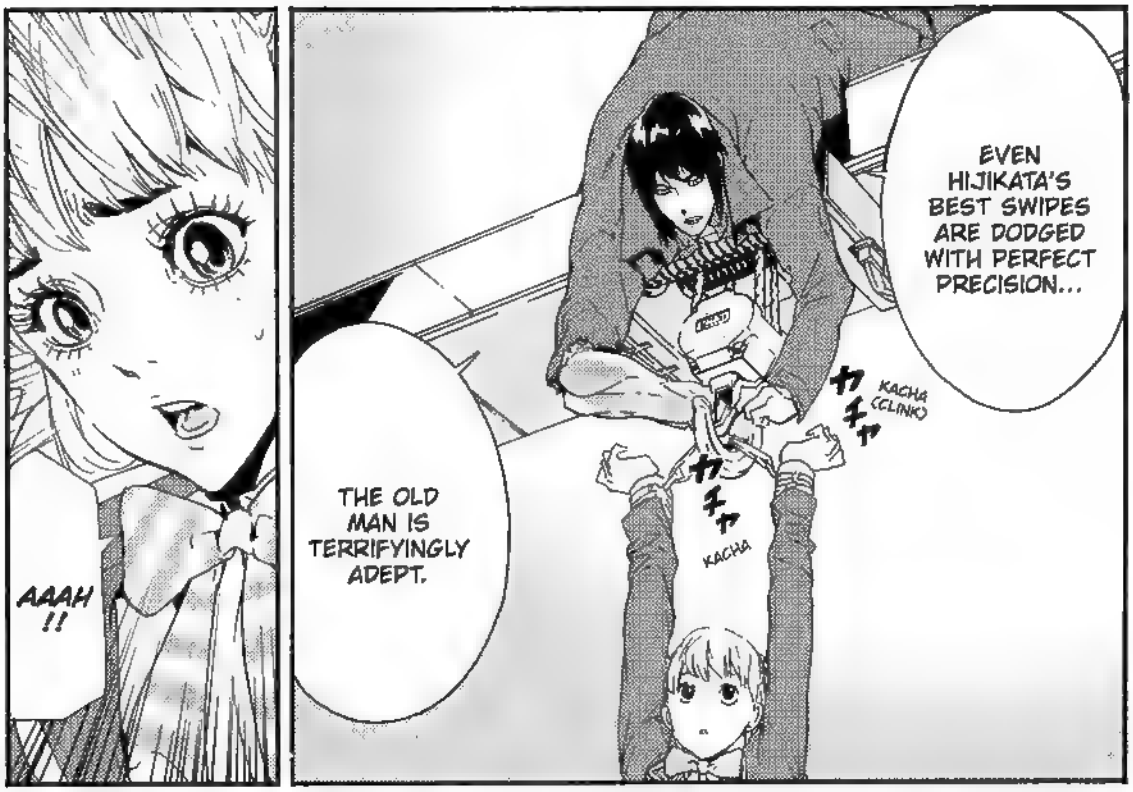
GOH
CHHOOHO


RESTING THE LARGE KATANA ON HIS SHOULDER MUST BE TO MINIMIZE THE STRAIN ON THE ARM DURING BATTLE.

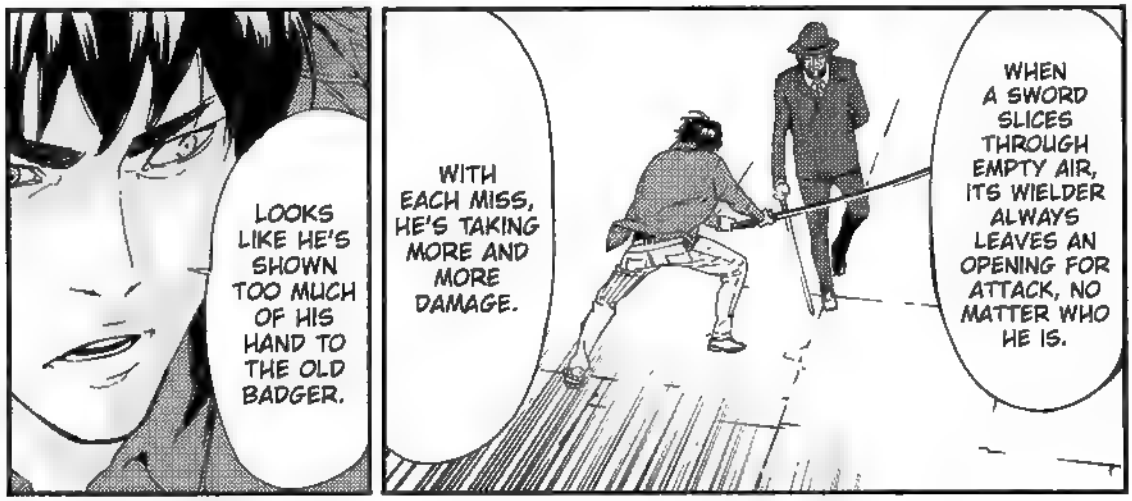
ZUBA (SLICE)
IS THIS WHAT HE'S CAPABLE OF AT HIS BEST...!?
THESE SWINGS ARE INSANE!

...
...
ZELM'S
...
...
SMILING
...
...

SO THIS IS THE EXPLOSIVE ...
YOU ALL RIGHT!?
HE'S GOT HIM READ ALL THE WAY.
HUH !?
CHA (CHIK)
チャ


AAAH !!
THE OLD MAN IS TERRIFYINGLY ADEPT.
EVEN HIJIKATA'S BEST SWIPES ARE DODGED WITH PERFECT PRECISION...
KACHA (CLINK)
カチャ
KACHA
カチャ

BUSHUU (BSSHT)


LOOKS LIKE HE'S SHOWN TOO MUCH OF HIS HAND TO THE OLD BADGER.
WITH EACH MISS, HE'S TAKING MORE AND MORE DAMAGE.
WHEN A SWORD SLICES THROUGH EMPTY AIR, ITS WIELDER ALWAYS LEAVES AN OPENING FOR ATTACK, NO MATTER WHO HE IS.

FOR HIS PART, HIJIKATA'S JUST BARELY AVOIDING TAKING A FATAL BLOW, BUT...
MAMORU-SAN...
BUSHU (BSSHT)
HE LIVES UP TO THE BILLING...

!?
HEY! I DON'T KNOW WHAT KIND OF WEAPON HE'S GOT...
CAN IT RUN OUT OF AMMO?
THAT'S AN INTERESTING IDEA YOU'VE HIT ON, IGAWA.
I was just wondering, since Haruka's friend was talking about their weapons earlier...
PERSONALLY, I SUSPECT THAT MIGHT BE A CRUCIAL HINT TO UNLOCKING THE MYSTERY.

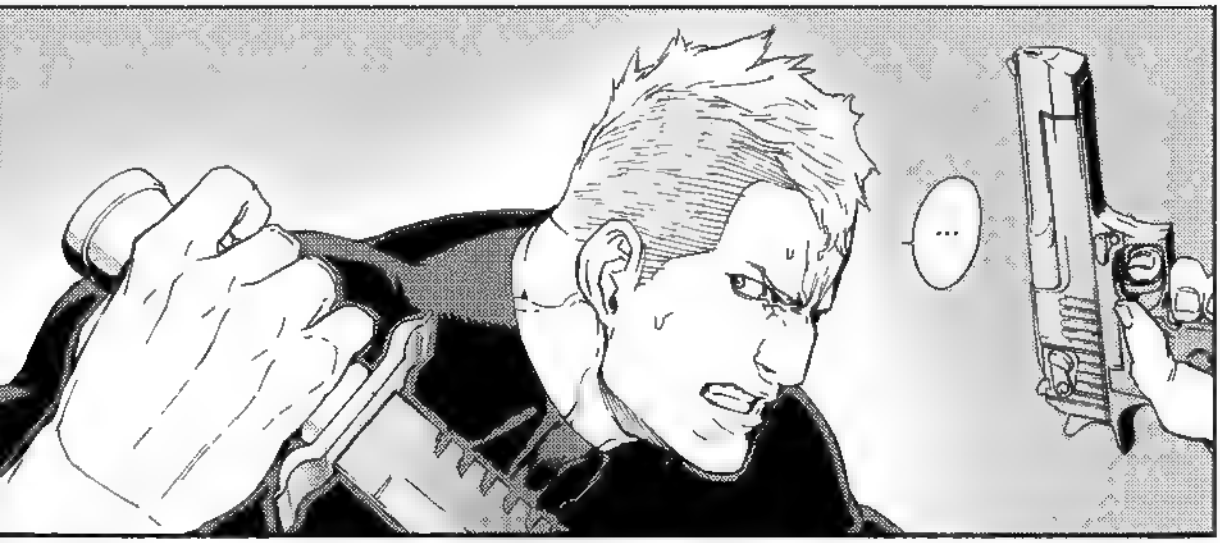
KACHA (CLICK)
カチャ
!?
AFTER ALL THAT TALK...
...YOU DON'T HAVE A BETTER STRATEGY THAN CHARGING FORWARD !?

AH...
DA (DASH)
...
BUSHU (BSHHT)
!?
DUMB-ASS!
HYU (SWISH)

RRGH!
SU (SWH)
スッ
BUSHU (BSHHT)
フシュッ
HYU (SWHS)
ヒュッ
...
...

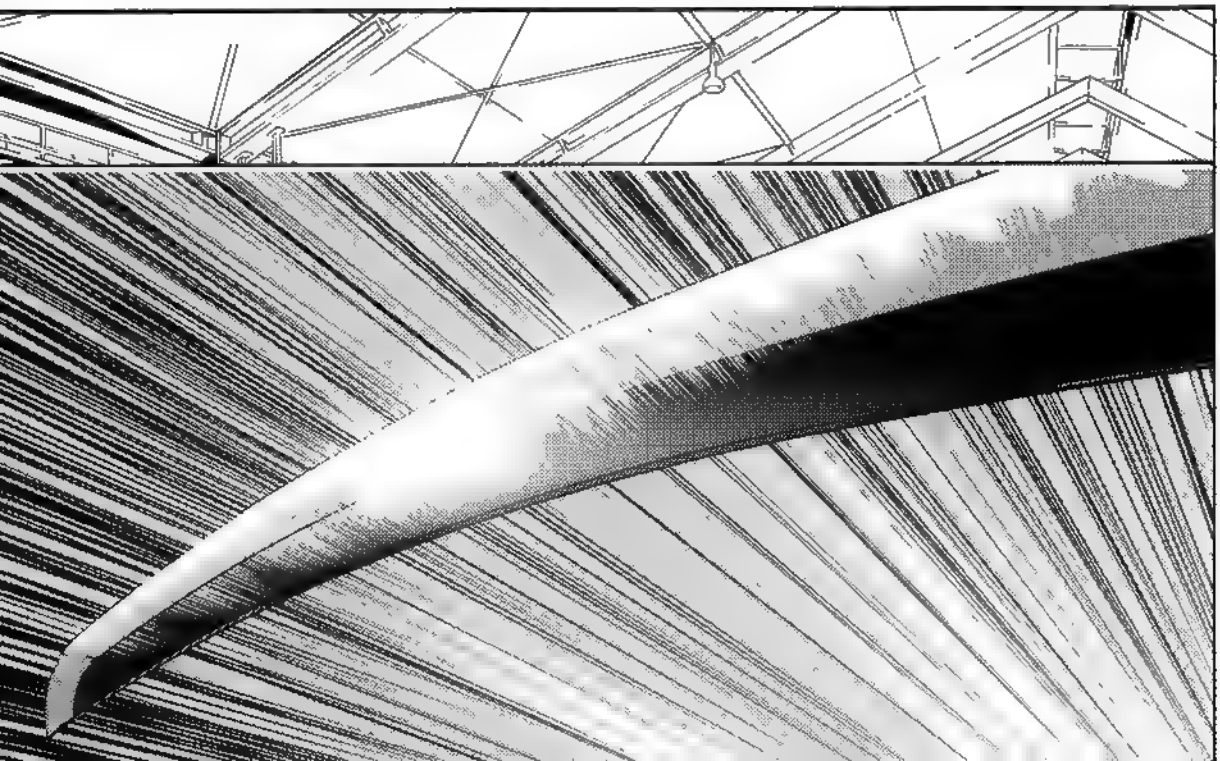
BAN (WHAM)
KACHA (CLICK)
IT'S YOU!
TSK!
!?

...
JUST MY LUCK. I KEEP RUNNING INTO EVERYONE BUT THE GUY I WANT.
...
ZA (ZSHK)
KAIZER !?
BAN (WHAM)


...

SO HE'S HERE.

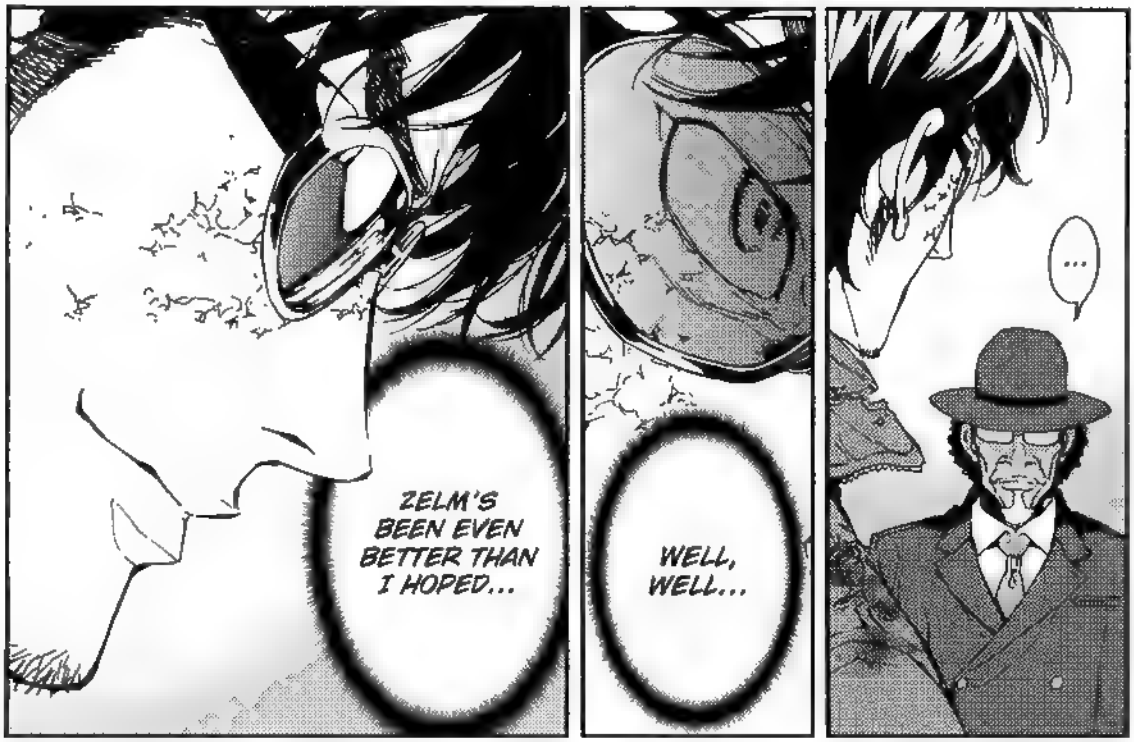
!?



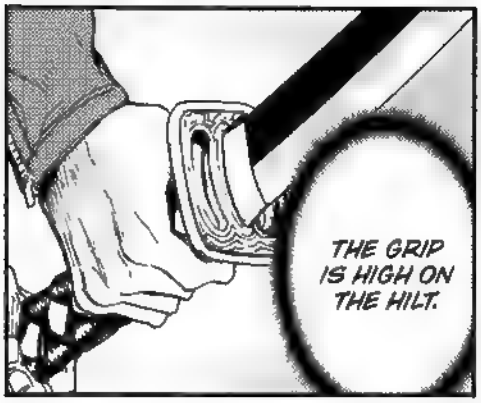
BUSHU (BSHHT)
!?
I CAN TELL... IT'S VERY CLEAR...
...
BUN (WHOOSH)

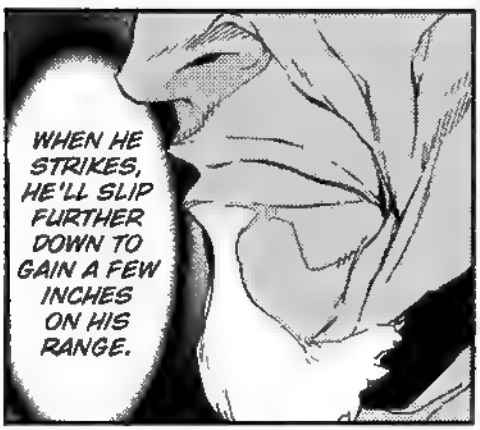
THE PRECISION OF HIS CENTER OF WEIGHT UNAFFECTED BY THE MPS
THE SURE-NESS OF HIS PIVOT
FOOT-WORK THAT SURPASSES EVEN WAU'S
THE LACK OF ANY WASTED ENERGY IN HIS COM-BINATION ATTACKS
HIS UN-ERRING INSTINCTS AND ADAPT-ABILITY
JUST HOW MUCH TRAINING HE'S UNDERGONE. HOW MUCH BLOOD, SWEAT AND TEARS HE'S SHED...
THE INCREDIBLE SKILL AND CRAFT CONTAINED IN EACH AND EVERY SWING OF HIS SWORD!

EACH AND EVERY ONE OF THESE QUALITIES PUTS HIM HEAD AND SHOULDERS ABOVE ANY RAW BOY WHO GREW UP UNDER THE SAME CIRCUMSTANCES.


ZELM'S BEEN EVEN BETTER THAN I HOPED...
WELL, WELL...
...

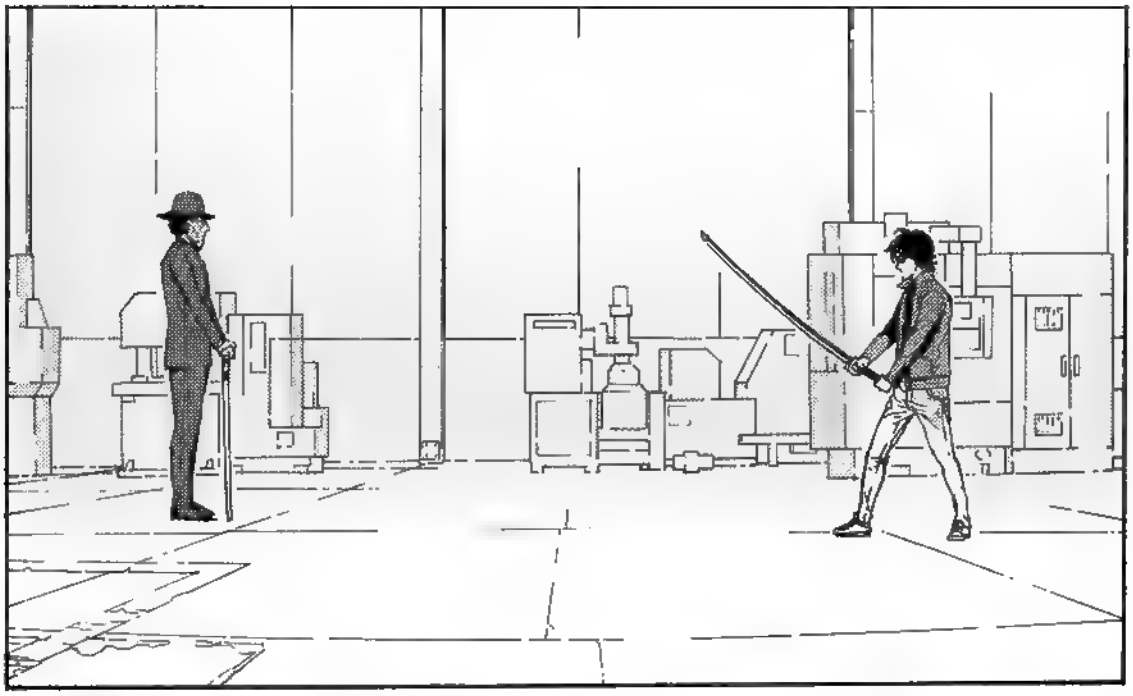
HIS NEXT ATTACK...


THE GRIP IS HIGH ON THE HILT.


WHEN HE STRIKES, HE'LL SLIP FURTHER DOWN TO GAIN A FEW INCHES ON HIS RANGE.

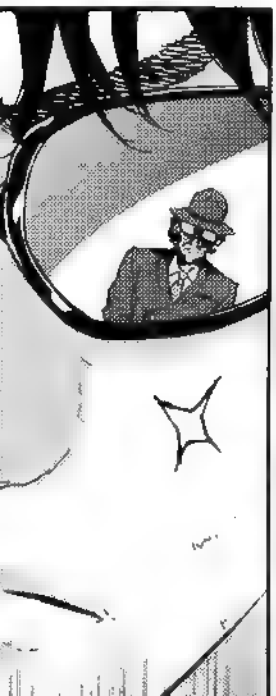
...IS THAT ALL YOU HAVE, SAMURAI?
...

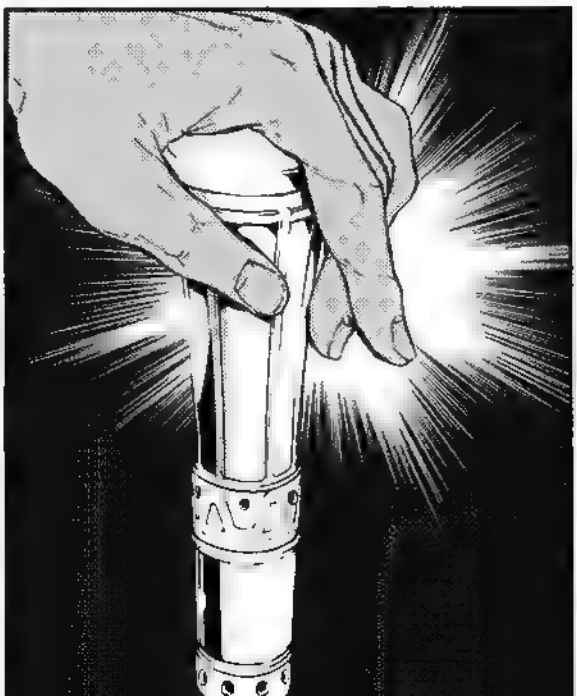
Until
Death
do us
Part

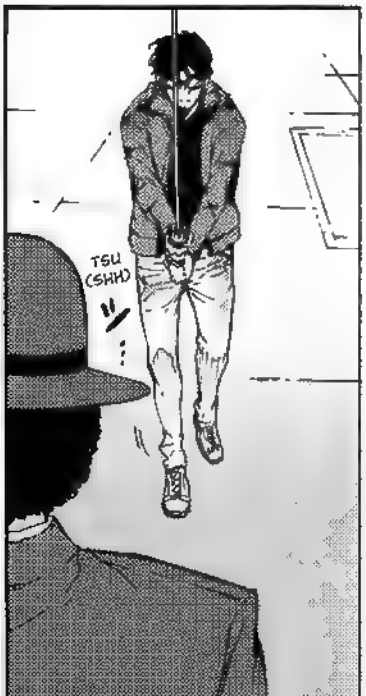


...

...






TSU
(SHH)

...
SU (HOP)
スッ
NOT FAR ENOUGH FOR HIM TO ATTACK FROM THERE.
HIS RANGE ISN'T THAT LONG... MAYBE FOUR METERS, AT BEST...
I SHOULD THINK OF IT LIKE A VERY SHORT-RANGE GUN.
IT HAS TO BE COMING FROM HIS CANE!
BUT HIS ACTUAL MOTION IS TINY AND HARD TO DETECT.

...THAT ATTACKS WITH SWORDS AND ATTACKS WITH GUNS ARE FUNDAMENTALLY DIFFERENT.
HE UNDERSTANDS INNATELY...
TO COMBAT THAT WEAKNESS, MAN DEVELOPED AUTOMATIC FIRE, CREATING BURSTS OF SCATTERED BULLETS THAT TURN THE POINT INTO A PLANE.
IT'S NO WONDER THE AUTOMATIC RIFLE IS THE CENTERPIECE OF MODERN COMBAT. WITH LONG RANGE AND LITTLE TO NO WEAKNESS, IT'S A CAPABLE WEAPON EVEN IN THE HANDS OF THE MODERATELY EXPERIENCED.
HOWEVER, THAT MEANS EVASION IS SIMPLE IF YOU KNOW WHERE THE LINE WILL BE.
DAMAGE FROM A BULLET OCCURS AT A POINT. IT FORMS A STRAIGHT LINE IN SPACE, SPLITTING ANYTHING THAT EXISTS ALONG THE LINE.
A BLADE SEVERS AND DESTROYS OBJECTS THAT EXIST IN THE PATH OF THE SWING— A LINE.
ITS WEAKNESS IS THAT ITS POWER ONLY EXTENDS TO THE LENGTH OF THE BLADE ITSELF.
BUT A GUN IS ENTIRELY DIFFERENT.

MY ATTACK, WHILE SHORT-RANGED, UTILIZES THAT "PLANE" METHOD.
SO HOW WILL HE TACKLE IT!?

chapter 143

BUSHU (BSSHT)
HNG!
TSK... HE'S MAKIN' ME PANIC, TRYIN' TO WRAP THIS FIGHT UP QUICKER.
LEARN WHEN TO TAKE A HINT, AND GO DOWN!
DOSU (THUD)
!?
GUGU (URRG)
...

WHAT'S WITH THIS GUY!?
WHAT'S WRONG!? YOU'RE SLOWING DOWN.
YOU TALK A BIG GAME!
'SPECIALLY FOR A GUY WITH NO PLAN.
IF I APPROACH FURTHER, HE'LL AVOID ME!
IF HE'S A PRO, HE'LL AVOID POINTLESS RISK...
PLUS HE'S HURT, PANICKED, AND CAN'T RUN.
AREN'T YOU SUPPOSED TO BE A PRO KILLER?
QUIT WASTING TIME AND COME AT ME, AND I'LL GIVE YOU A TASTE OF THIS STICK.

HEH-HEH. I WASN'T TAKING ALL THOSE HITS FOR NOTHING.
WELL... SHALL WE...?
WHAT!?
THIS... THIS GUY'S CRAZY...
HYU (SWISH)
SCREW YOU, MAN!
TSUU (CLEAN)

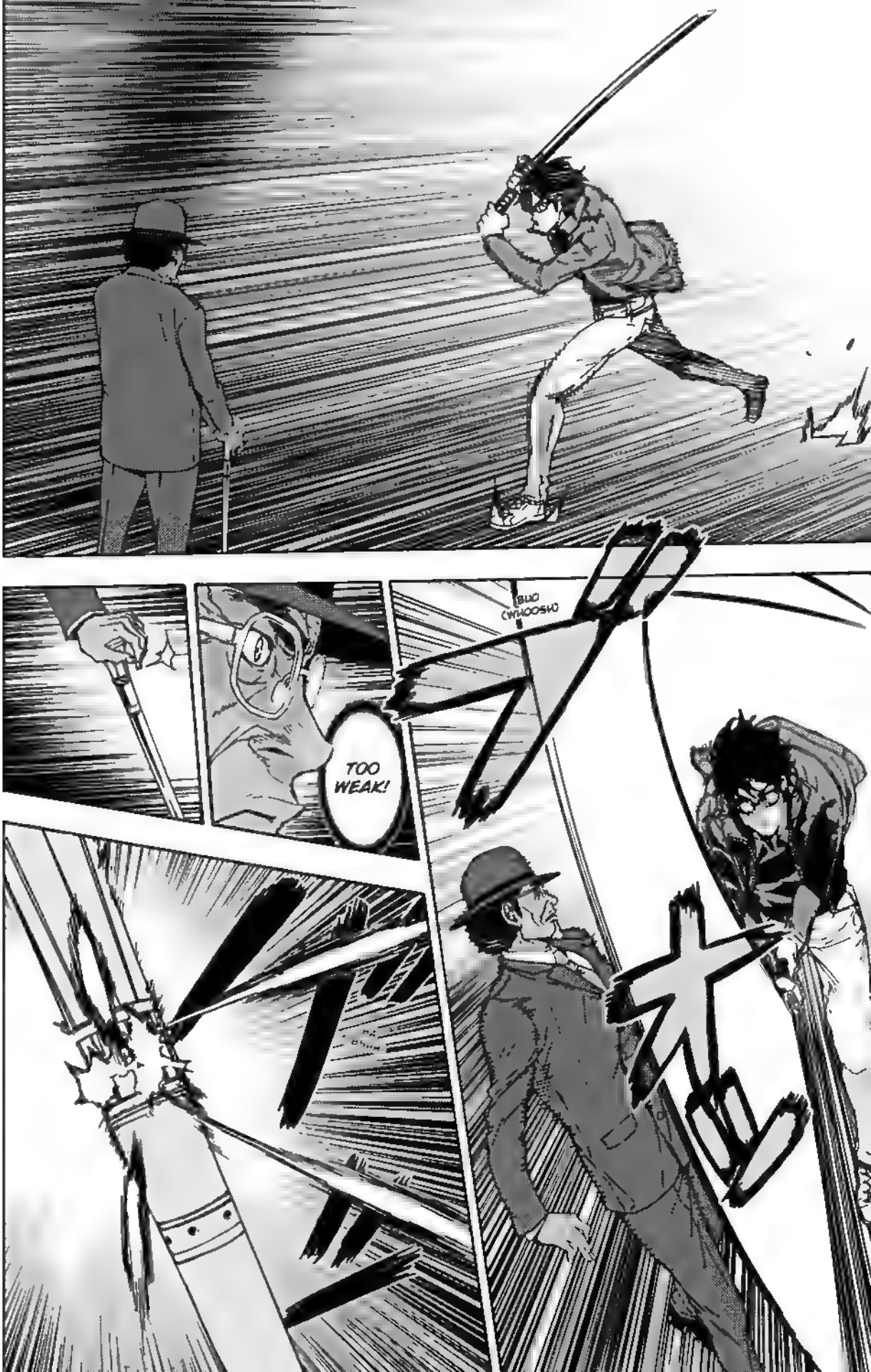
HE BIT!
DA (DSHH)
ZUDO (THWUD)

GAAH !!
EVEN A BABY CAN AVOID A DIRECT FORWARD STRIKE IF HE SEES IT COMING.
IDIOT! YOU ASSUMED I WAS AN AMATEUR.
ドサ
DOSA (THUMP)
AAAAGH!!
ガチャ
GACHA (CLICK)

KARITO'S WITH HER NOW. DON'T WORRY.
OH, GOOD. YOU'VE BEEN FREED ALREADY.
WHAT ABOUT HARUKA TOOYAMA!?
GENDA-SAN!
I WASN'T WORRIED IN THE LEAST. BUT WASN'T THERE ANY OTHER WAY FOR YOU TO WIN?
UNLIKE TATE, I HAD TO SUFFER QUITE A BIT OF DANGER. MUST HAVE WORRIED YOU.
...SO I JUST CLOSED UNTIL I WAS NEAR ENOUGH TO MAKE A DIRECT BLOW.
AGAINST AN INVISIBLE WEAPON, I HAD TO BET ON ONE STRIKE...
GYU (SQUEEZE)
I HAVEN'T BEEN IN ENOUGH BATTLES TO AVOID ATTACKS WITH INSTINCT ALONE.

I'LL LET TATE HANDLE THE REST.
HATE TO SAY IT, BUT IN MY STATE, I'LL DO NOTHING BUT MAKE A MESS OF THINGS...
AND I DOUBT IT WOULD HAVE WORKED IF HE HADN'T BEEN WOUNDED.
WELL, I'LL REPORT THE SITUATION TO KARITO. FIND A SAFE SPOT TO HIDE.
YOU BE CAREFUL NOW.
UH... THANKS.
NO, YOU WERE SPLENDID, AGENT GENDA.
CAN'T EVEN DO MY JOB WELL ENOUGH TO GIVE A LITTLE GIRL PEACE OF MIND...
GOOD GRIEF...

SUU (SWIPE)
スウ…
HERE HE COMES!
YOU WON'T ESCAPE THE NEXT ONE.


TOO WEAK!

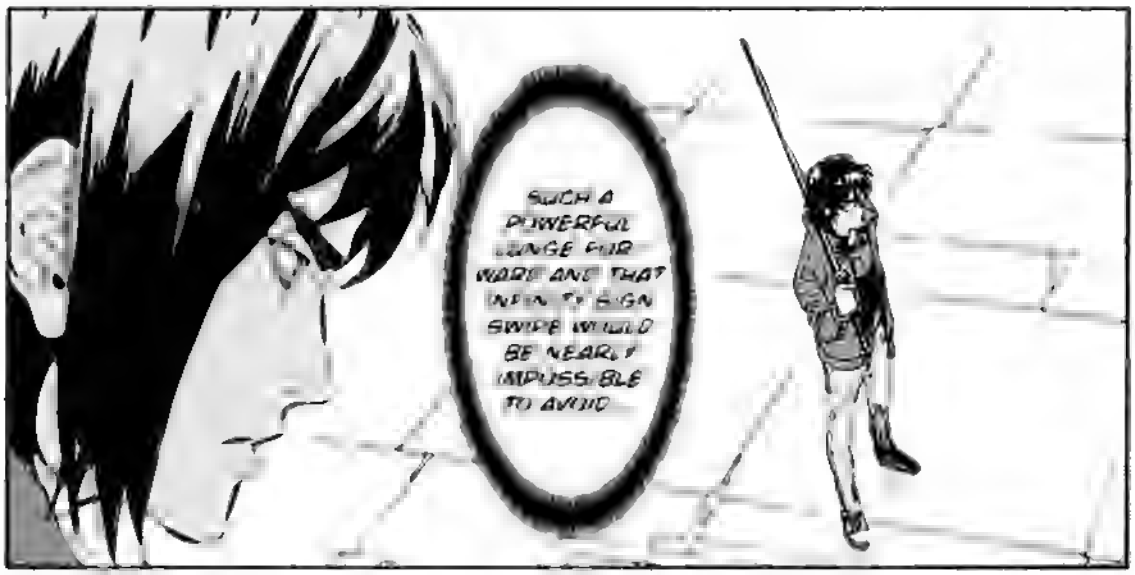
KIN
(TING)

BYUN
(WHOOSH)

...ZELM
...?

WH... WHAT...
...DID YOU JUST DO...!?
HOWEVER IT WORKS, YOUR CANE SHOOTS LITTLE METAL SPEARS LIKE HOOKS, THEN PULLS THEM BACK.
IT CAN EVEN RAPID FIRE. A VERY INTERESTING KILLING TOOL.
IT'S A REVERSE SLICE OF THE GANRYU STYLE CALLED "KOSETSU."
I ADDED MY OWN WRINKLE TO IT, BASED ON A STORY OF A SWALLOW STRUCK OUT OF MIDAIR.

GANRYU?
UM, IS THAT THE FAMOUS...
GANRYU IS SASAKI KOJIRO'S STYLE...
WHAT IS IT!?
THE "TSUBAME GAESHI" SWALLOW CUT...
YES. THERE ARE NO ACCURATE DESCRIPTIONS OF THE TECHNIQUE, SO NO ONE CAN SAY IF THAT WAS REALLY IT...
...BUT I HAVE NO DOUBT THAT HIJIKATA CRAFTED THAT ATTACK BASED ON HIS OWN INTERPRETATION.


SUCH A POWERFUL LUNGE FOR WARE ANT THAT MISS BY A SIGN SWIPE WOULD BE NEARLY IMPOSSIBLE TO AVOID

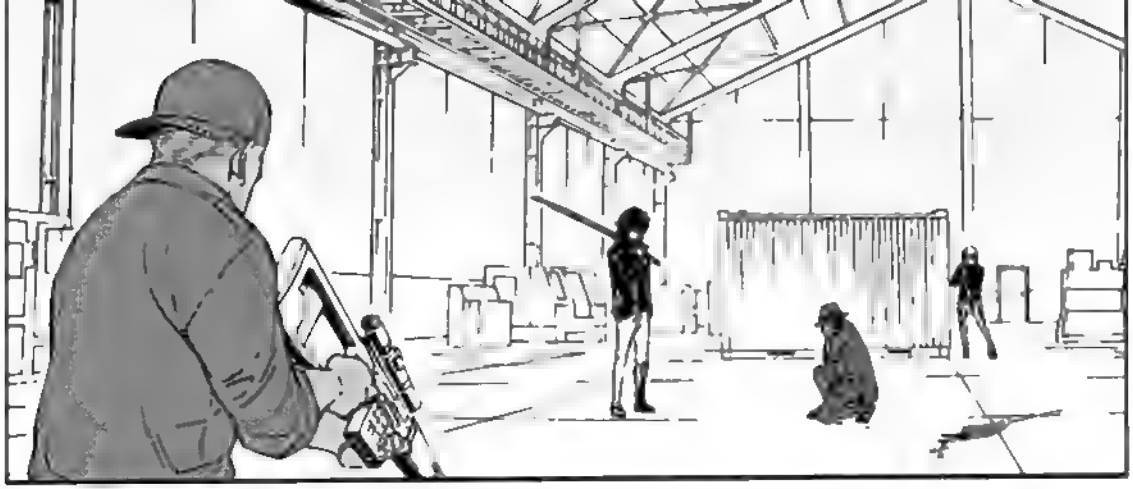
THIS WAS ONLY POSSIBLE WITH A LONG KATANA WHERE THE MOVEMENT AT THE HILT IS AMPLIFIED MANY TIMES AT THE TIP
BUT TO ACCOMPLISH THAT TRAJECTORY WITH A HEAVY MASSIVE NODACHI REQUIRES PHENOMENAL PHYSICAL SKILL

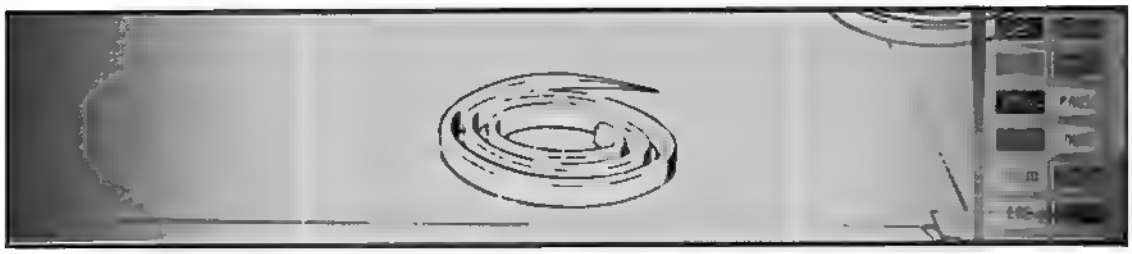
STUFF IT...
...YOU ECCENTRIC OLD TURD.

BRILLIANT.

I WANT TO TALK TO YOUR BOSS.
WILL YOU PASS ON THE MESSAGE?

chapter 144



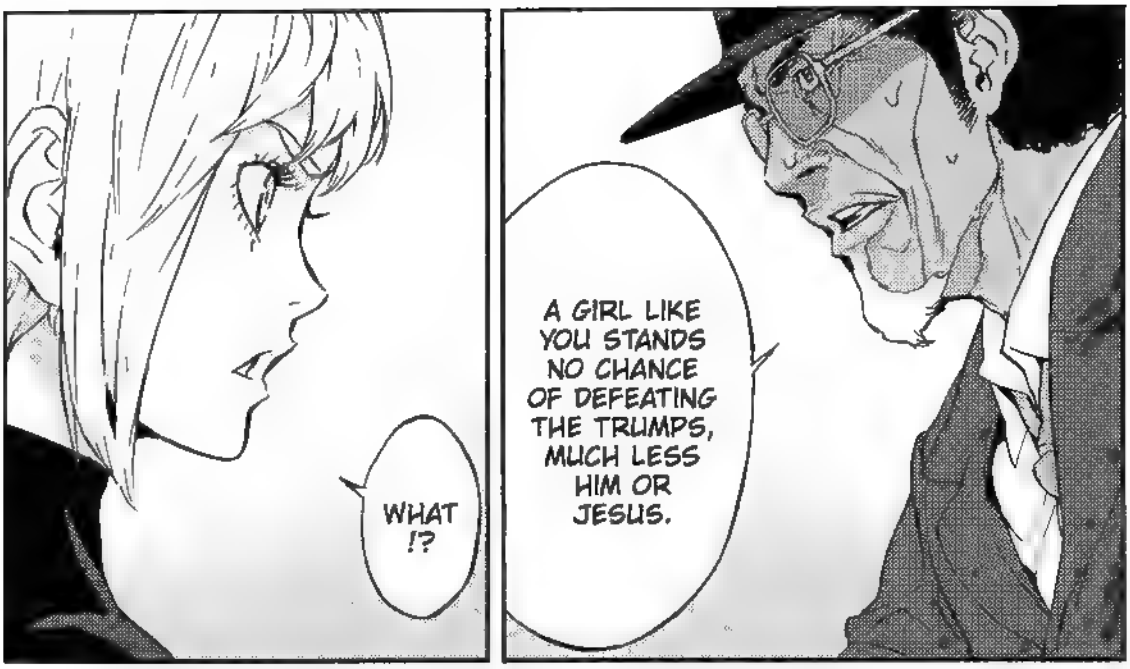


IS THAT METAL? IT'S LIKE A BUNCH OF LITTLE WIRES ROLLED UP INTO COILS.
GUESS THERE WAS A DEVICE INSIDE THE CANE THAT INSTANTLY CONTRACTS THEM.

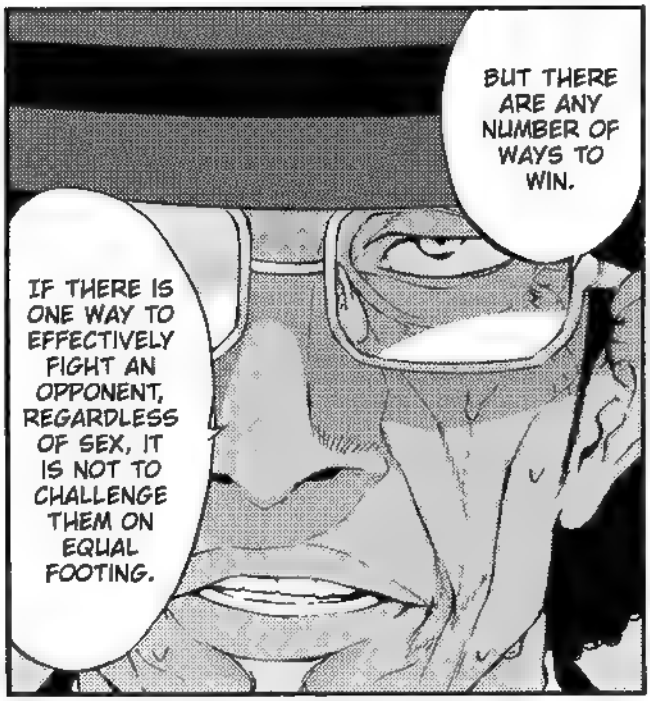
I FIGURED THAT WAS THE KIND OF TRICK YOU WERE USING...
THAT'S WHY I JUST SLICED THROUGH THE ENTIRE SPACE

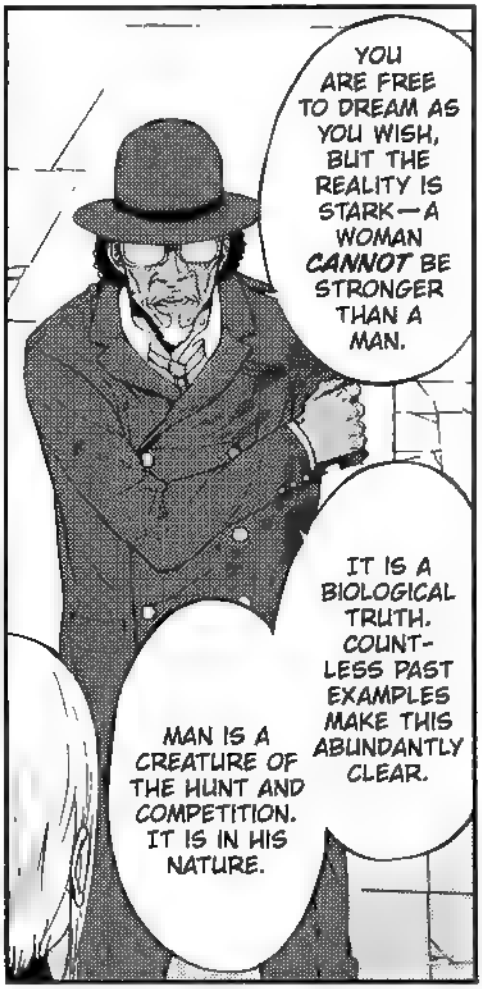
...VERY WELL...
BUT FIRST, I WOULD LIKE YOU TO HEAR ME OUT.
WHERE IS YOUR BOSS NOW!?
...
...
HEY!
!?
WHAT ARE YOU PLANNING !?
PLANNING? NOTHING. I SIMPLY HAVE A MESSAGE TO IMPART.

TA (TEK)
TA
WANTS ME TO BACK UP SOMEONE ELSE...? SHIT!
I'M GOING TO DEAL WITH THEIR BOSS.
...
HE WANTS TO TALK TO YOU.
BA (FLIP)
I HAVE SOME-THING TO SAY TO YOU.
H-HEY!


WHAT !?
A GIRL LIKE YOU STANDS NO CHANCE OF DEFEATING THE TRUMPS, MUCH LESS HIM OR JESUS.

...


BUT THERE ARE ANY NUMBER OF WAYS TO WIN.
IF THERE IS ONE WAY TO EFFECTIVELY FIGHT AN OPPONENT, REGARDLESS OF SEX, IT IS NOT TO CHALLENGE THEM ON EQUAL FOOTING.


YOU ARE FREE TO DREAM AS YOU WISH, BUT THE REALITY IS STARK—A WOMAN *CANNOT* BE STRONGER THAN A MAN.
IT IS A BIOLOGICAL TRUTH. COUNT-LESS PAST EXAMPLES MAKE THIS ABUNDANTLY CLEAR.
MAN IS A CREATURE OF THE HUNT AND COMPETITION. IT IS IN HIS NATURE.

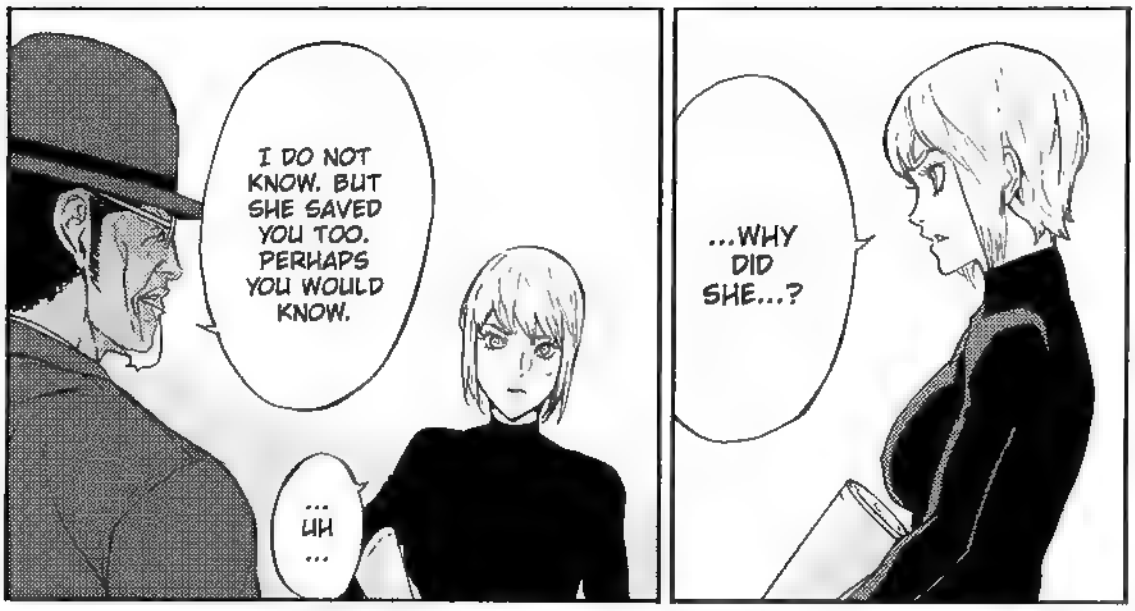
HUH? YES...
THIS FIGHT WAS AN EXAMPLE OF THAT STRATEGY. DID YOU WATCH CLOSELY?
LURE THE OPPONENT INTO YOUR REALM AND PRESS TO FINISH THE FIGHT WHILE YOU HAVE THE NATURAL ADVANTAGE.
THE WIRE IS SO FINE THAT THE NAKED EYE CAN BARELY SEE IT.
ITS RANGE IS ONLY FOUR METERS, WHICH MEANS IT ATTACKS OVER THE SPAN OF POINT ONE SECONDS. NO HUMAN BEING CAN REACT IN THAT TIME.
YOU EXPERIENCED MY CANE FOR YOURSELF. IT SHOOTS WIRE SPEARS THAT TRAVEL AT A SPEED OF 40 METERS PER SECOND.

AND YET, AS YOU SAW...
BASED ON WEAPON FUNCTION, RANGE, AND SPEED...
...I HELD A CLEAR AND DEVASTATING ADVANTAGE IN OUR DUEL.
WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO SAY!?
...WHAT I LACK...
THAT IS WHAT HE AND JESUS HAVE THAT YOU LACK!
...WITH AMPLE KNOWLEDGE OF ONE'S WEAPON AND TACTICS THE ENEMY CANNOT PREDICT, IT IS POSSIBLE TO DISREGARD A DISADVANTAGE AND SEIZE VICTORY DESPITE THE ODDS.

...
WHY WOULD YOU TELL ME THAT!?
!?
BECAUSE YOU ARE TIGER'S DISCIPLE.
I WAS A MERCENARY IN THE MIDST OF A GUERILLA STRUGGLE.
IT WAS YEARS AGO...

BUT TO MY MISFORTUNE, A STRAY BULLET GLANCED OFF A TREE AND PIERCED MY LEG.
MY PLATOON WAS ACTIVE IN THE FIELD OF BATTLE AND GOT SPLIT APART. I FOUND MYSELF ALONE.
THAT BY ITSELF DID NOT MEAN ANYTHING—I SIMPLY HAD TO BREAK THROUGH THE ENEMY LINE ON MY OWN.
A SOLDIER WHO CANNOT MOVE HAS NO CHOICE BUT TO WAIT TO DIE.

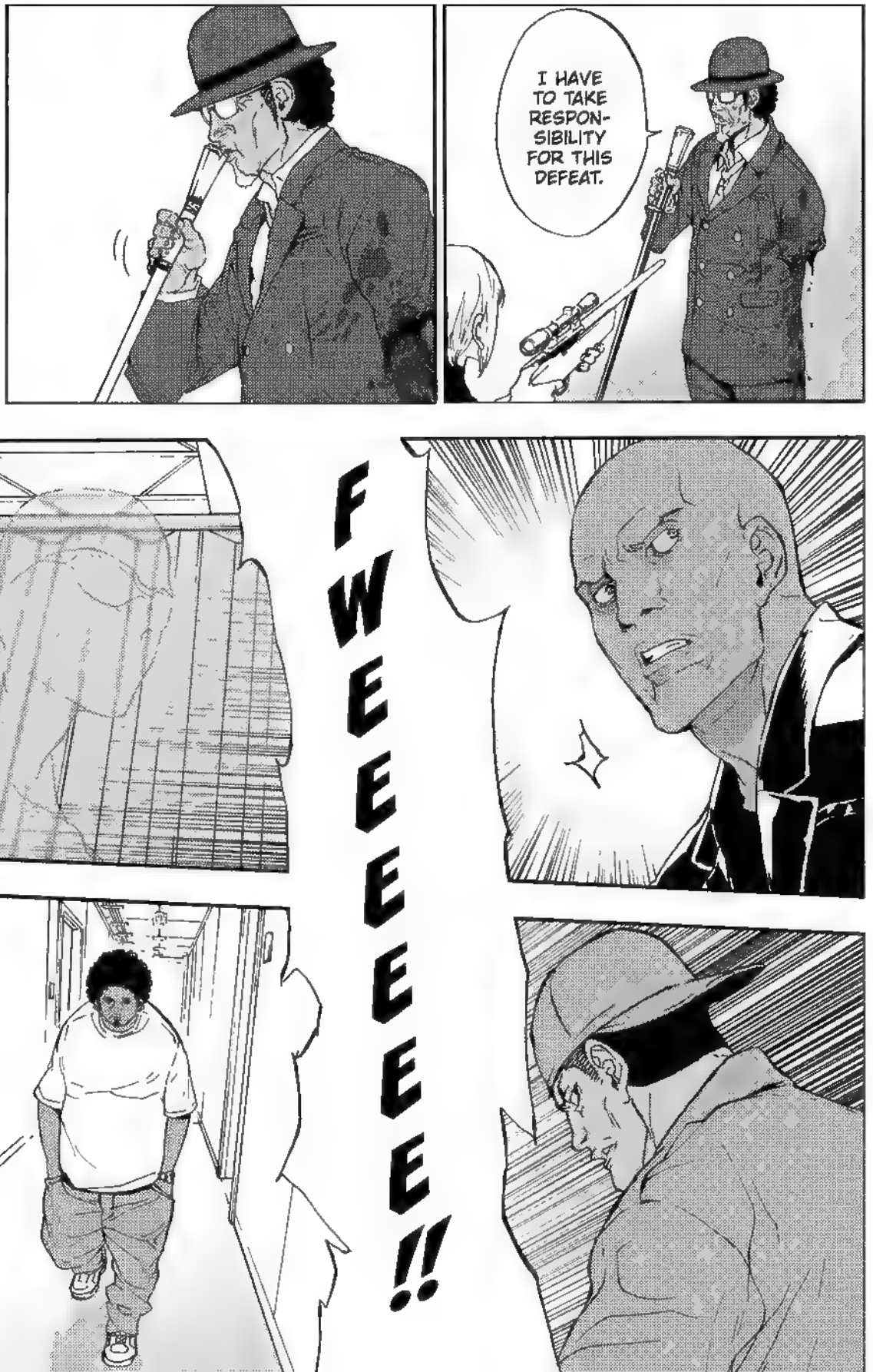
SHE APPEARED OUT OF NOWHERE, SLUNG ME OVER HER SHOULDER WITHOUT A WORD...
...AND CARRIED ME A DOZEN MILES THROUGH ENEMY TERRITORY BACK TO SAFETY.


I DO NOT KNOW. BUT SHE SAVED YOU TOO. PERHAPS YOU WOULD KNOW.
...
UH
...
...WHY DID SHE...?

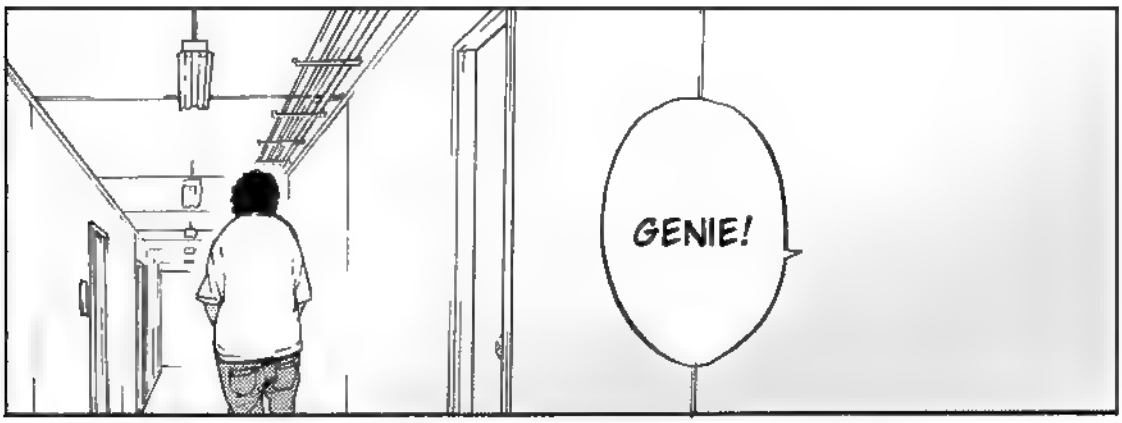
SHE WAS A BEAUTY.

TRULY.

ENOUGH TALK OF THE PAST.
KURU (SPIN)
KI (GLARE)
ARE YOU SAYING ...?
...
TURUS HAS YOUR PROSTHETIC ARM. HE'S IN HIDING AT THE MINAMI-TOUGE HOSPITAL.
DO WITH HIM AS YOU WILL.
!?
AEGIS!
WHY WOULD YOU TELL ME!?


I HAVE TO TAKE RESPON-SIBILITY FOR THIS DEFEAT.
FWEEEEE!!

TA
(TEK)
TA
ッ
UGH!
SAY WHAT !?
...
...SO... ZELM LOST...


GENIE!

YOU MADE IT THROUGH WITH YOUR LIFE INTACT, AND NOW YOU'RE GONNA WASTE IT HERE?

...
...
I'M A BAD-ASS, MAN.

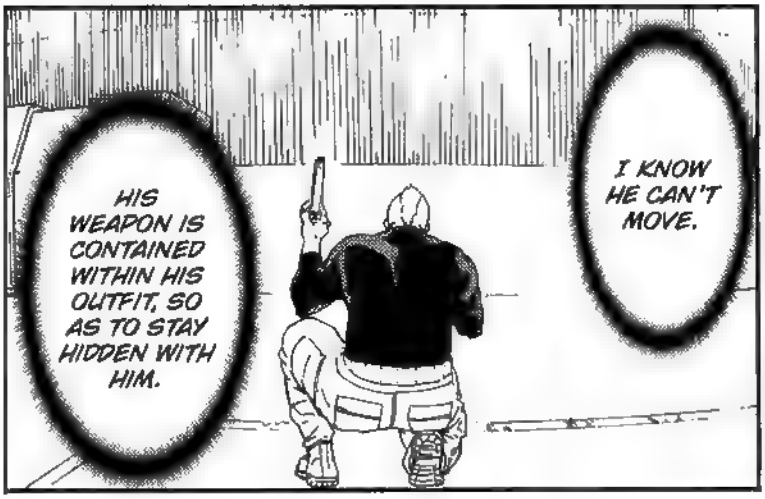
Until
Death
do us
Part

NOT ONLY DID I LEARN A VALUABLE SECRET OF SWORDS-MANSHIP...
...I EVEN HAD A PLEASANT STROLL DOWN MEMORY LANE.
IS THAT THE SIGNAL TO PULL BACK?
...
KARAN (CLUNK)
NO!
PIN (PING)
IT WAS WORTH LIVING TO THIS AGE.
SU (SHH)

chapter 145
DON (BLAM)
KAN (CLANG)
KAN

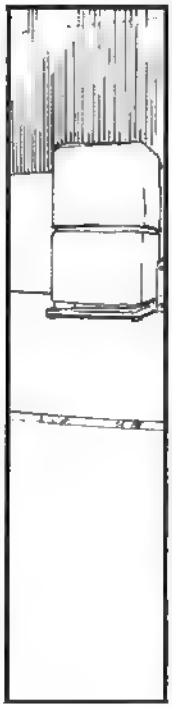
...SUPERB ACCURACY FOR SUCH A STANCE...
NORMALLY, I'D HAVE AVOIDED YOUR FIRE, BUT I DIDN'T ACTUALLY THINK YOU WOULD HIT THE FUSE.

MANAMI WOULD HAVE DONE THE EXACT SAME THING.
YOU DIDN'T THINK SO? I'M AFRAID I MADE A PROMISE TO A FRIEND NOT TO KILL ANYONE ON THIS MISSION.
I CANNOT HAVE THAT PROMISE BROKEN RIGHT BEFORE MY EYES.
...
KEEP AN EYE ON HIM.
I'M GOING TO AID JESUS AND THE OTHERS!


HIS WEAPON IS CONTAINED WITHIN HIS OUTFIT, SO AS TO STAY HIDDEN WITH HIM.
I KNOW HE CAN'T MOVE.

HE'S THERE ...

THAT WAS THE ORDER TO RETREAT ...
BUT MOVE FIRST, AND I DIE.



SO AS SOON AS I SENSE ANY KIND OF MOVEMENT, ANY VIBRATION...
...I'LL BE ABLE TO REACT FIRST!!

BABA (LEAP)
BABA
TAN (TOMP)
BUN (WHOOSH)
GUI (TUG)
ENOUGH OF THE CHICKEN-SHIT STUFF!

HYUN (SWISH)
!?
KURU (SPIN)
CHA (CLICK)
BA (LEAP)

WHOA!
ZUGA (THWAM)
TA (LEAP)
YOU CALL THAT A HIDING SPOT!?
GA (DOOM)
GA
GA
TAN (CHOP)
GA

BUN (WHOOM)
I GOTCHA NOW!!
DON (POW)
WHEN HIS PAPER-WEIGHT FLIES STRAIGHT, HIT IT FRONT AND CENTER!!

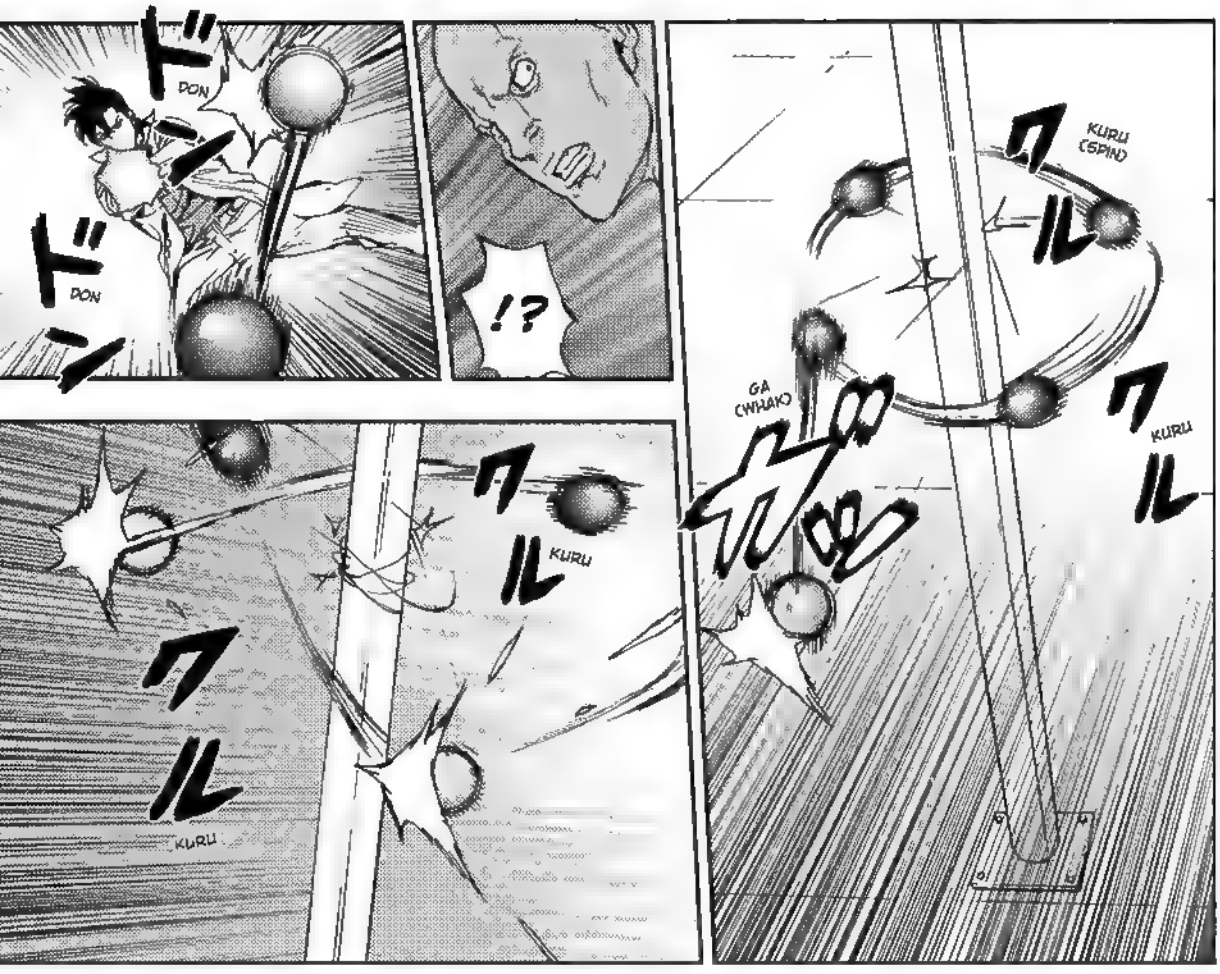
DO
(BOOM)
NICE TRY!
YOU THINK I DIDN'T HAVE A DEFENSE AGAINST THAT!?
YOU JUST SPED IT UP! NOW TASTE THE PAIN!!

GA
(THWAM)

SOMEONE TOOK DOWN JESUS—AND IT WASN'T ME!?
!?

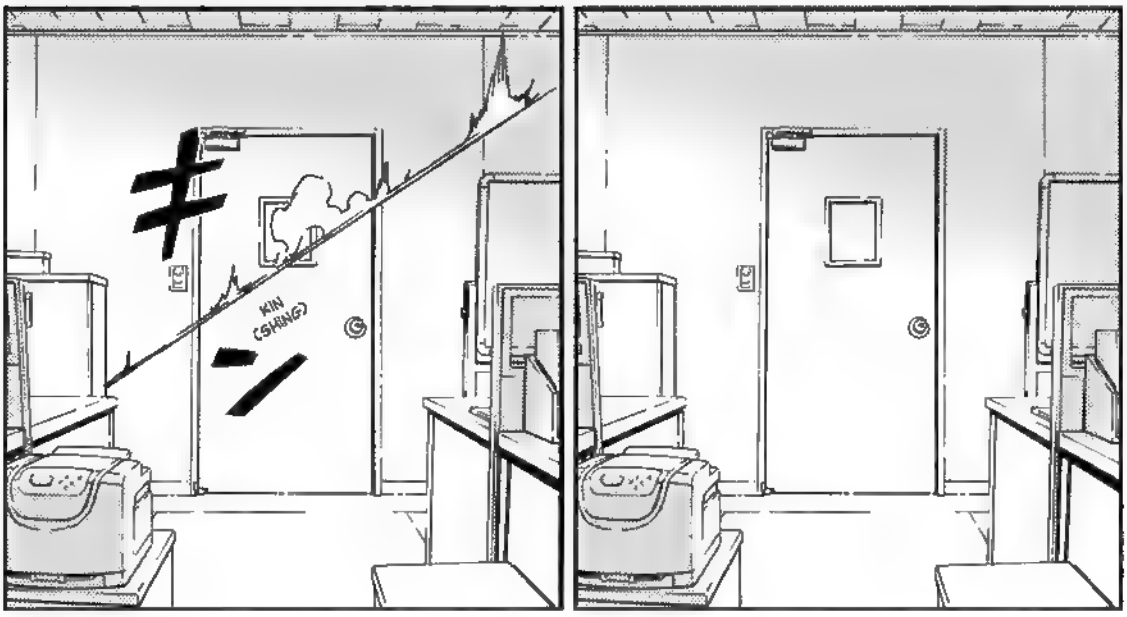
!?
GOHH
(WHOOSH)

DON (BLAM)
WHAT...!? HOW!?


DON
DON
!?
KURU (SPIN)
GA (WHAK)
KURU
KURU
KURU

OLDEST TRICK IN THE BOOK.
GUI (TUG)
GUI
AFTER ALL, THE BALL BOUNCES OFF OF HARD SURFACES.
GO (THUD)
HIJIKATA MADE A BUNCH OF THESE METAL PLATES FOR ME AND LEFT 'EM IN THE CORNER OF THE FACTORY.
WHEN YOU USE A SPECIAL WEAPON LIKE THAT...

...YOU NEED TO DISPATCH THE ENEMY IN ONE GO, RATHER THAN LETTING YOUR SECRET OUT!!


KIN (SHING)

BAN
(THWANG)
9"
DOKA
(THWANG)

ガシャン
(CRASH)
タタン
(TAP)
タン
HE'S SURE LIGHT ON HIS FEET.
DAN
(WHAM)
ダン

AND NOW I'M GONNA AVENGE ZELM'S DEFEAT.
I'VE GOT A RECORD OF 10.04 IN THE 100-METER DASH. I CAN RUN CIRCLES AROUND YOU, FOOL.
...WHA ...?
!?
BUSHUU (BSHAKK)

I TOOK ZELM'S LESSONS, AND I CAN WIELD ANY-THING HE'S CREATED.
EVEN THESE, THOUGH NOT AS SLICK AS N'SINH DOES.
THE INVISIBLE BLADES...
YOU DON'T SEEM TO FARE TOO WELL AGAINST THESE BABIES.
KUWUN (SWISH)
KURU (FLIP)
HEY, RELAX.
IT'S JUST FOR SELF-DEFENSE. THAT WAS MY LAST ONE.

(HSOOHM)
ONIS
!?

GUESS THAT DON'T MATTER TO YOU, DOES IT?
WHOA!
BIJO (WHOOSH)
BA (SPIN)

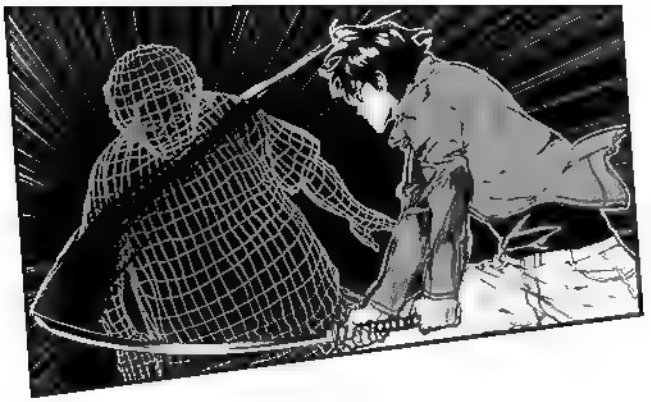
GRR!
SUTON (THUMP)
スー
YOU DON'T GET JOKES, DO YOU?

HE'S BROADER, ALMOST SUPER-HUMAN ...
BUT NOT IN THE SENSE OF ZELM, WHO EXPERTLY EVADED WITH AN INCH TO SPARE.
...HE IS PRETTY GOOD, AFTER ALL...
DON'T BE FOOLED BY HIS CASUAL BANTER AND MANNER-ISMS...
HIS REAL WEAPON IS HIS UNEARTHLY PHYSIQUE. HE'LL KEEP SURPASSING MY EXPEC-TATIONS.
...
WHAT'S WITH THIS GUY!? HE SHOULD BE EXHAUSTED BY NOW.
...
AND HIS SWINGS ARE EVEN SHARPER THAN AGAINST GARA WHEN HE STARTED.
IS HE GETTING BETTER THE MORE HE FIGHTS?
THIS WAS A TERRIBLE MISTAKE. YOU OR I SHOULD HAVE GONE AGAINST HIM FROM THE START, ZELM.

HMM?
ZA
(STOMP)

...
...
ZELM'S BACKUP PLAN, HUH...?
SORRY, LOOKS LIKE THE GAME ENDS HERE. MY OTHER SOLDIERS HAVE ARRIVED ON THE SCENE.
GONNA TRY YOUR LUCK?
IF YOU COULD ACTUALLY CUT YOUR WAY FREE AGAINST THIS MANY GUN BARRELS, YOU MUST BE SUPERMAN.
LET ME WARN YOU—THEY DON'T HAVE OUR FUNKY WEAPONS, BUT THEY'RE EQUAL TO THE TRUMPS IN SKILL.

CUT ALL SYSTEMS.
...
NO SIGNAL
ピ
WHAT DOES HE THINK HE'S DOING...!?
NO SIGNAL
H-HEY!
WHAT'S GOING ON, MAMORU !?

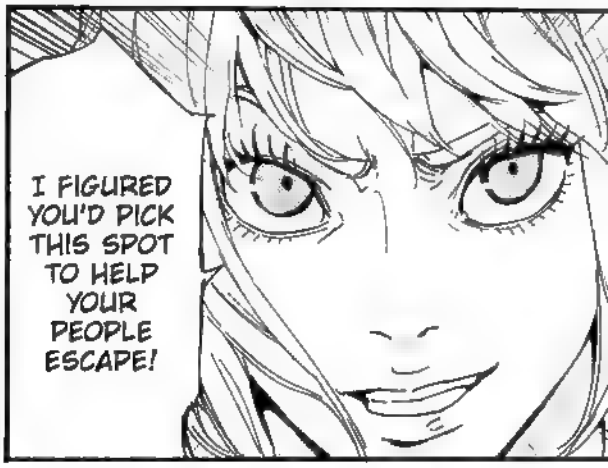


Until
Death
do us
Part

HEH... GOT YA RIGHT IN MY SIGHTS...
chapter 146
!?
BA (SPIN)

KIN (CHANG)
YOU !?

TSK! DIDN'T EXPECT THE SNIPER TO PICK A CLOSE COMBAT FIGHT...


I FIGURED YOU'D PICK THIS SPOT TO HELP YOUR PEOPLE ESCAPE!

ZELM SAID THAT?

THAT WAS ZELM'S ADVICE. I CHOSE THE SMART ROUTE, NOT CHALLENGING A VETERAN SNIPER AT HIS GAME.
GA (WHAK)
DID I CATCH YOU BY SURPRISE?
GA
GA

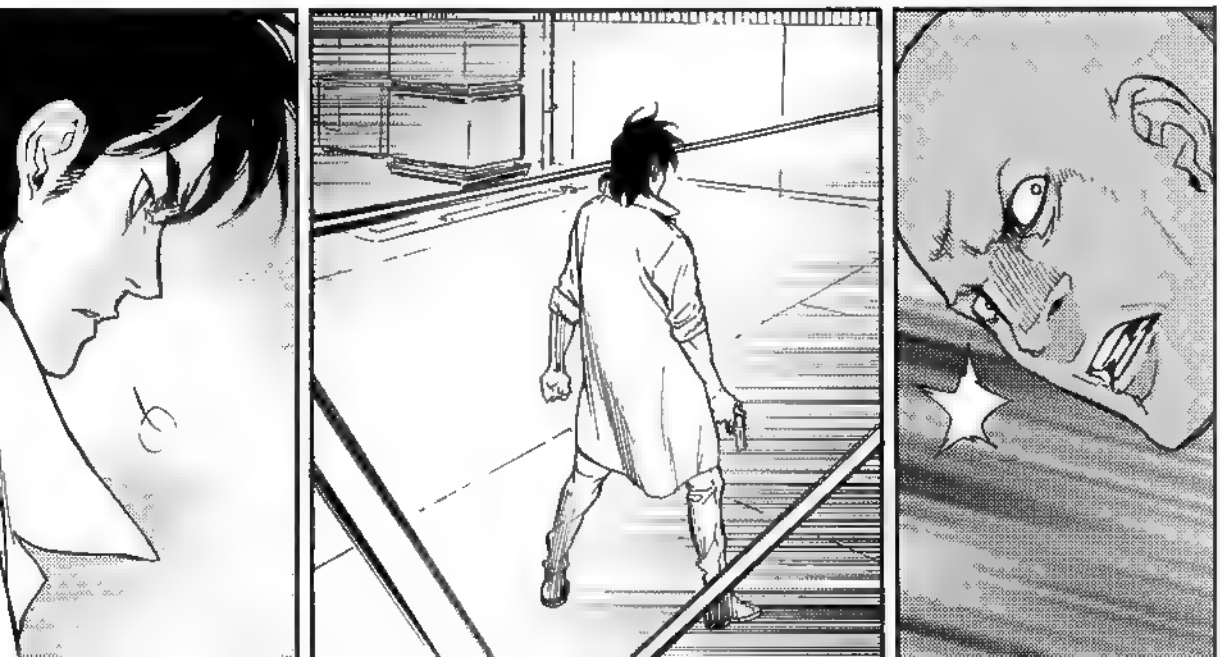
THIS LONG-RANGE WEAPON'S AT A DIS-ADVANTAGE HERE!
GUGUGU (HRRRG)
I AIN'T GOIN' DOWN THAT EASY!
GA
CHA (SWIPE)
BA (WHOOSH)
SO HE GAVE UP ON HIS GUN...
SMART CHOICE...

SHA (SHUP)
DON'T TELL ME YOU THINK YOU'VE WON!!
!?
HEH HEH HEH.
HEH ...

BUN (WHOOSH)
I AIN'T GONNA BE DONE IN BY A SIMPLE PISTOL, NOTHING MORE!

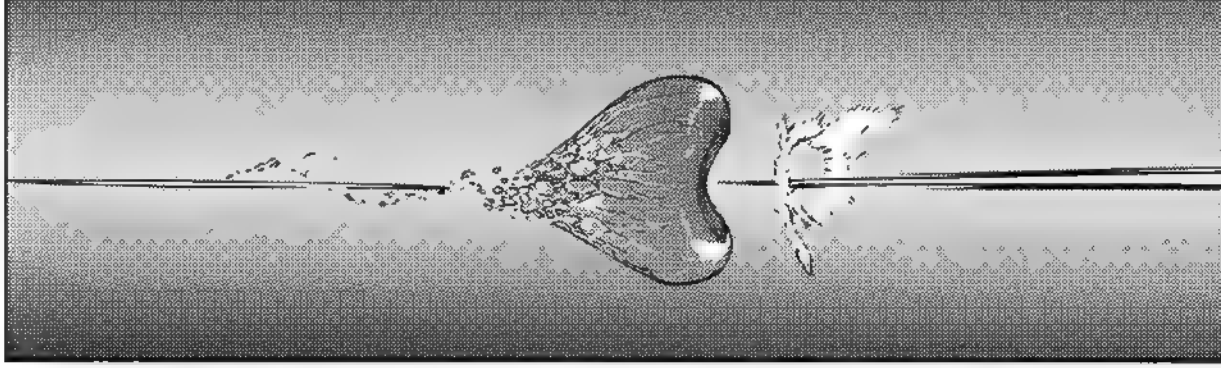
UGH!
YOU GOT NO WAY TO PROTECT YOURSELF NOW!
BYUN (SWISH)

I WON'T HAVE TIME TO RELOAD.
TWO SHOTS LEFT. IF HE KEEPS DARTING AROUND LIKE THAT, IT'LL BE HARDER TO FINISH HIM OFF.



IDIOT! YOU'RE ONLY GONNA SPEED UP ITS ATTACK!!

DON
(BLAM)



PAAN
(KPOW)

WHAT THE FUCK!?
!?

BECAUSE I SHOT TWICE.
CHA (CLICK)
チャ
THAT MATERIAL CAN ABSORB A .44 MAGNUM SLUG!
HOW CAN A .38 POSSIBLY...
I ONLY HEARD ONE SHOT!
WHA —!?
THE SAME SPOT!? THAT'S IM-POSSIBLE!
EVEN A GUN FIXED ON A MOUNT CAN'T HIT THE EXACT SAME SPOT TWICE IN A ROW!
I SHOT IT A SPLIT-SECOND LATER, SO IT HIT THE EXACT SAME SPOT AT THE MOMENT IT WAS PUSHED OUT OF ALIGN-MENT.

AW, JESUS ...
YOU REALLY FORCED ME TO DIG DEEP ON THIS ONE, TRUMP.
THAT WAS SUPPOSED TO BE MY SECRET ATTACK AGAINST AEGIS AND HIJIKATA.
THAT'S MY NAME!

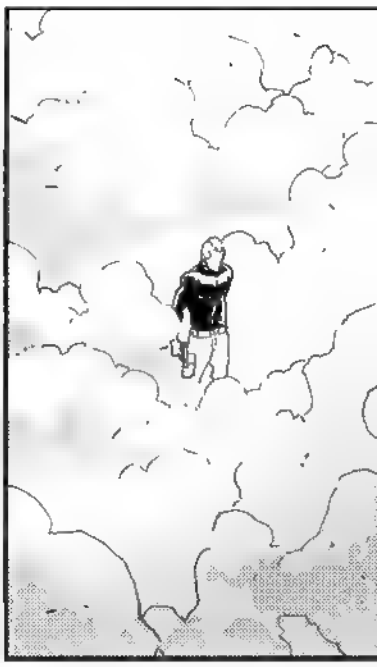
BUSHUU (BSHHT)

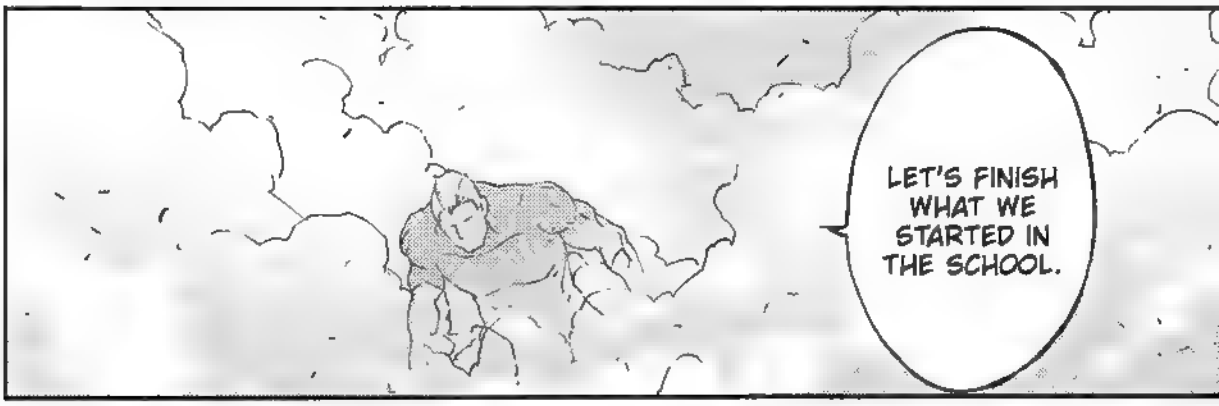
ZUKI (THROB)
UGH...

BA (WHOOSH)

DAMN!
DID HE GET BACKUP!?

FINALLY ON THE MOVE...
BUT THIS IS JUST WHAT I WANT...




LET'S FINISH WHAT WE STARTED IN THE SCHOOL.

KIN (TING)

DON
(BLAM)
GA
(WHAM)
GA
GA
GA
DON

WHERE DID HE GO...!?
ONE HIT FROM A STRAY ROUND WOULD BE NO JOKE.
SHIT! KAIZER'S FIRING THAT CANNON ALL OVER THE PLACE.
GA

BUO (WHOOSH)
HYUN
HYUN (SWISH)

MAKES NO SENSE...
BUT IT MEANS THERE'S ONLY ONE ANSWER...

GASHI
(SNATCH)
FINALLY GOT YOU!!

(GUO)
(YANK)
グオッ
!?
BAN
(WHAM)

DON (THWUD)
GAAAH!!
ドガ
DOGA (KPOOM)

!?
NO MORE TRICKS!

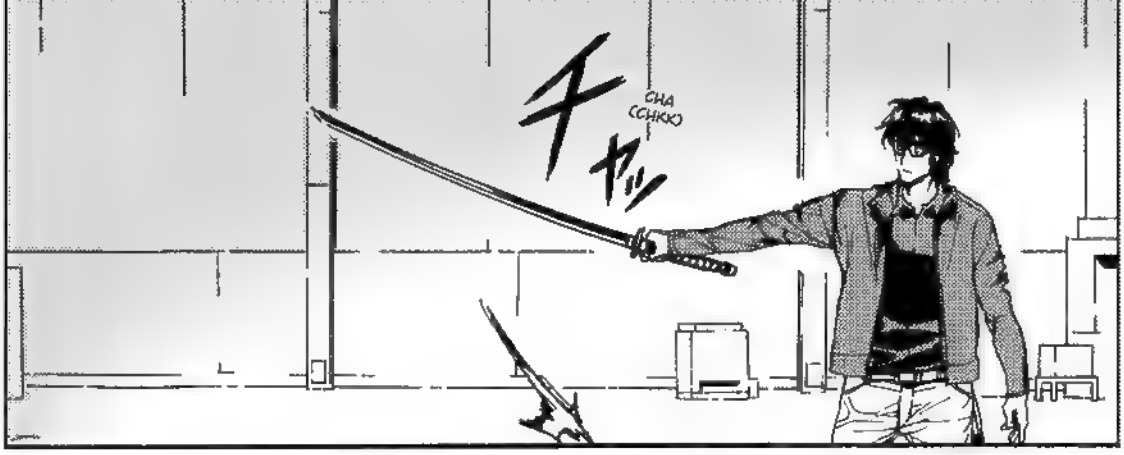
...
NO WONDER WE WERE GETTING PUSHED AROUND SO MUCH— THERE WERE TWO OF YOU.

IN THE A/V ROOM. YOU SLIPPED IN WITH ZELM
THAT'S HOW HE ATTACKS SUDDENLY. CAME ON SO MUCH FASTER AM I WRONG?
ハッ

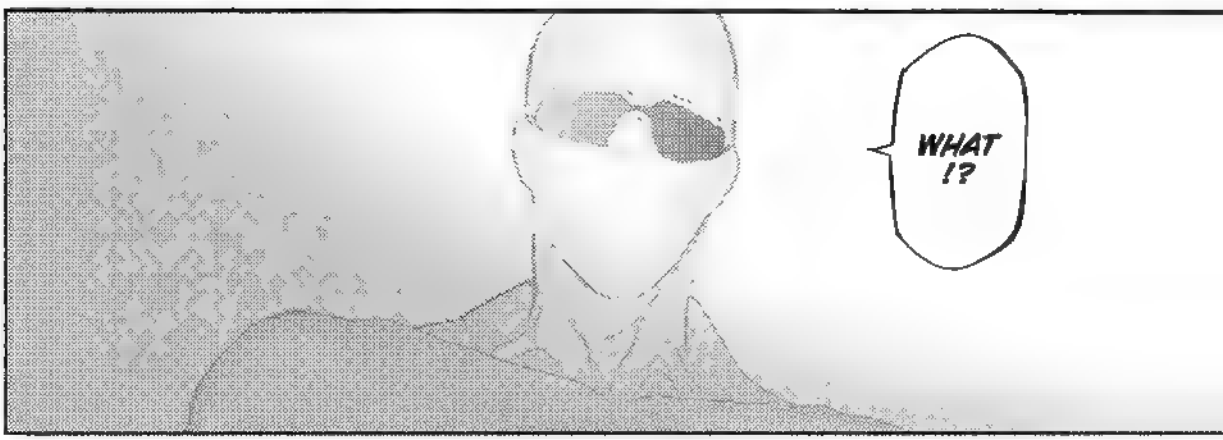
KIN
(CHING)

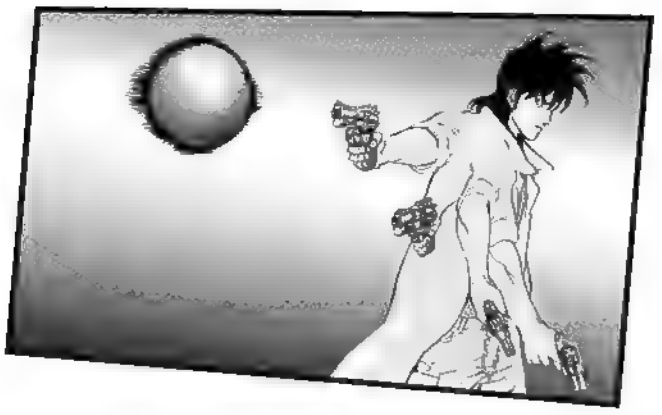
...
STAY OUT OF THIS, SAMURAI!

GASHI (SNATCH)
YOU... RAT...
BUN (TOSS)
I'M GONNA NEED YOU TO SIT THIS ONE OUT.
YOU'RE THE BIGGEST HAZARD IN THIS PLACE...


CHA (CHIKK)

I'VE COME TO AN AGREEMENT WITH YOUR BOSS. CHECK WITH HIM, THEN LEAVE AT ONCE.


WHAT!?



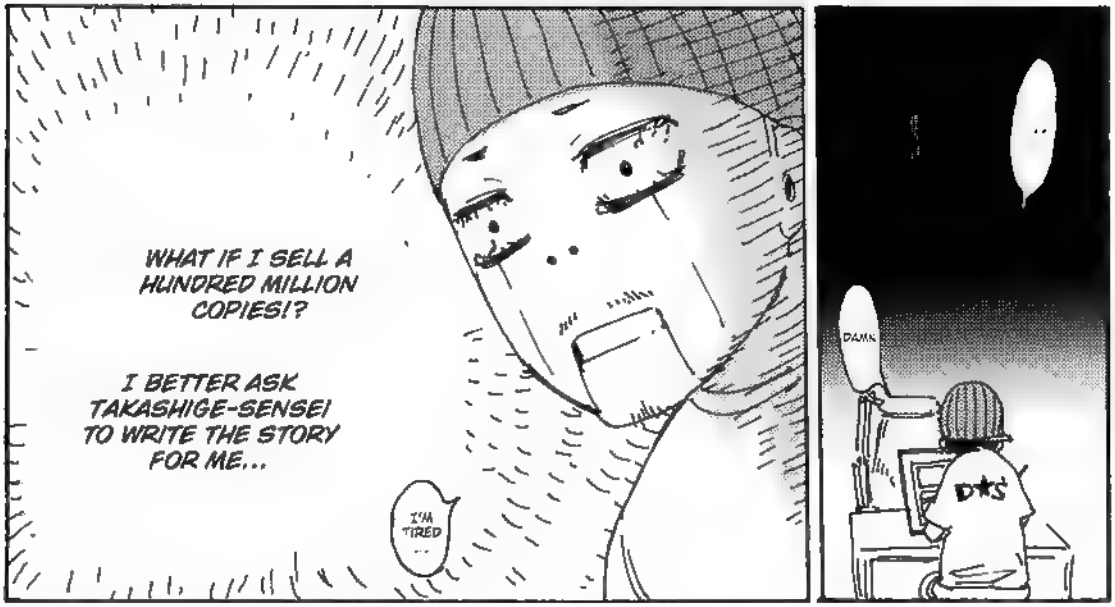
Until
Death
do us
Part

OMAKE PAGE
PREVIEW
FreeSIDE
SERIOUS MOE CURLING MANGA!!
DOKI
DOKI
DOKI (BA-BUMP)
DOKI
A CROWD OF FIFTY THOUSAND IS PRESENT TO WATCH THE CURLING WORLD LEAGUE CHAMPIONSHIP, BROADCAST TO AN AUDIENCE OF TWO BILLION WORLDWIDE!!
XX-CITY, CURLING ICE RINK

HERE I GO!!
HAAAH !!
I RECOGNIZE IT... IT'S THE LEGENDARY "FIRE SLIDE" PIONEERED BY A-KO'S LATE FATHER!!
OHH!!
TH-THAT MOVE!!
OOH!
WOW !!

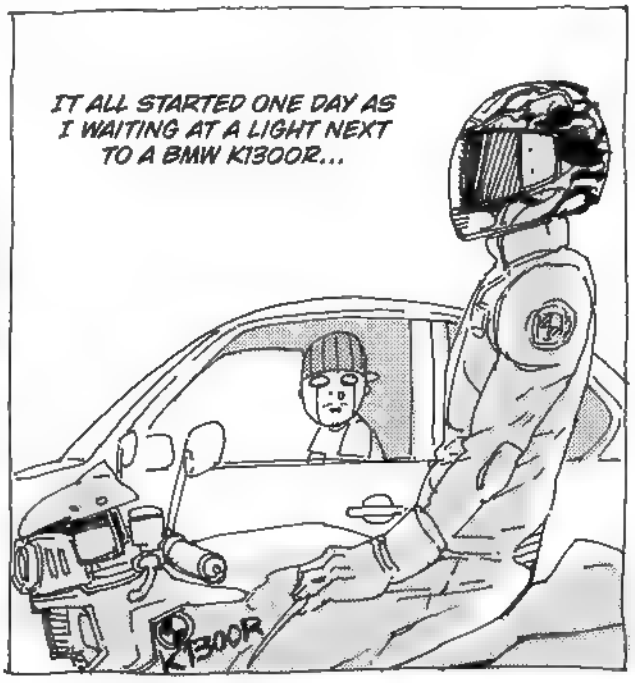
FIRE !!
GO!!
IT'S TOO DANGEROUS! WE HAVE TO STOP HER!!
IT'S TRUE THAT A-KO'S FATHER BECAME A LEGEND WHEN HE USED THAT SKILL AT THE FINALS ...
DOKI (BA-BUMP)
OH, MY FRIEND... ARE YOU WATCHING THIS?
THE LEGEND LIVES AGAIN... AT THE HAND OF YOUR DAUGHTER!!
THE ICE ATOP THE RINK MELTED, AND...
...HE DROWNED!
!!
BUT IRONICALLY, THE FLAMES WERE SO POWERFUL, THEY TOOK HIS LIFE...
FATHER...
DOKI
DOKI

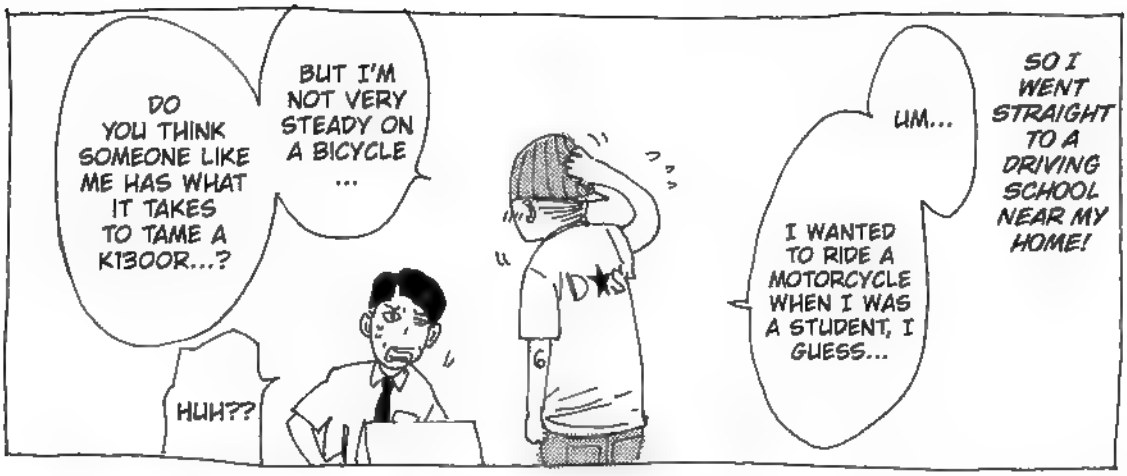
FIRE SLIDE COMING UP!!

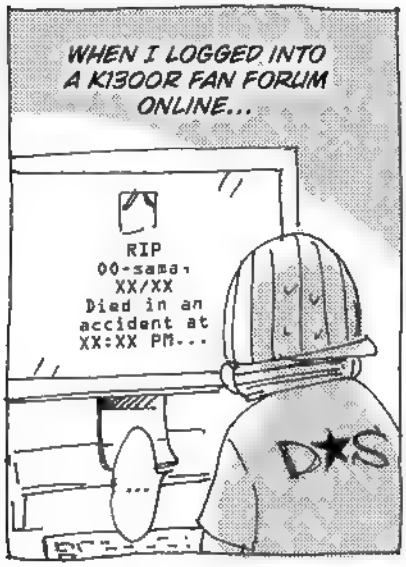


WHAT WILL HAPPEN IN THE NEXT VOLUME OF FIRE SLIDE!?
(PROBABLY NOTHING. SORRY...)

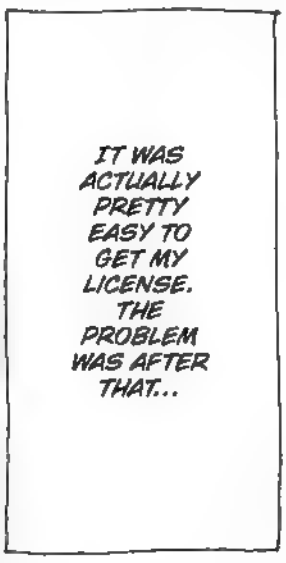
I GOT A STANDARD TWO-WHEEL DRIVING LICENSE.

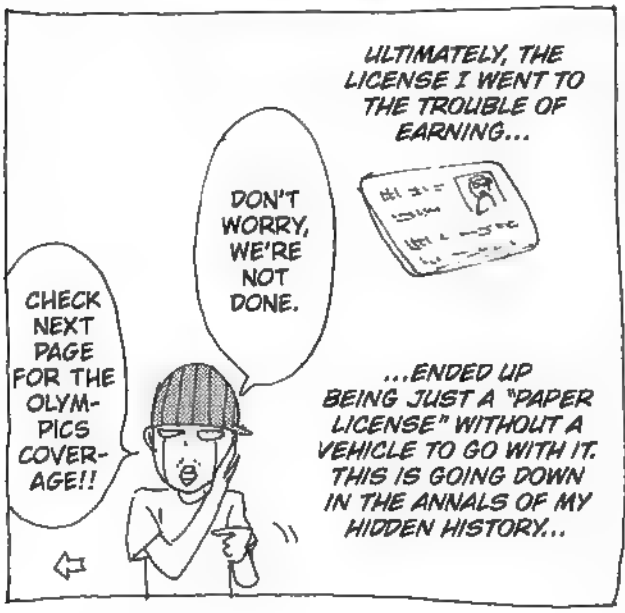



DO YOU THINK SOMEONE LIKE ME HAS WHAT IT TAKES TO TAME A K1300R...?
BUT I'M NOT VERY STEADY ON A BICYCLE ...
HUH??
UM...
I WANTED TO RIDE A MOTORCYCLE WHEN I WAS A STUDENT, I GUESS...
SO I WENT STRAIGHT TO A DRIVING SCHOOL NEAR MY HOME!


WHEN I LOGGED INTO A K1300R FAN FORUM ONLINE...
RIP
00-sama
XX/XX
Died in an accident at XX:XX PM...
...

LISTEN TO ME: DON'T EVER RIDE A MOTOR-CYCLE...
...ANOTHER AUTHOR I KNOW GOT REALLY HURT IN A BAD ACCIDENT...
Y-YES, SIR...


IT WAS ACTUALLY PRETTY EASY TO GET MY LICENSE. THE PROBLEM WAS AFTER THAT...


ULTIMATELY, THE LICENSE I WENT TO THE TROUBLE OF EARNING...
DON'T WORRY, WE'RE NOT DONE.
CHECK NEXT PAGE FOR THE OLYM-PICS COVER-AGE!!
...ENDED UP BEING JUST A "PAPER LICENSE" WITHOUT A VEHICLE TO GO WITH IT. THIS IS GOING DOWN IN THE ANNALS OF MY HIDDEN HISTORY...

RISKING YOUR LIFE IS WHAT MAKES IT SO FRICKIN' COOL!
YEAH, NO SHIT!
MY HARLEY-LOVING PAL WAS THE ONE WHO PUT THE NAIL IN THE COFFIN...
HARLEY DAVIDSON
HUH ...?

I TRIED DRAWING THE WIDTH OF THE INTERNATIONAL REGULATION BALANCE BEAM, AND...
10cm
HMM, I FEEL LIKE...
...I COULD DO THIS ...
SWI (SHH)
???
OOH ...
DAMN!
D★S
YOU'RE OVER THE LINE.
NO GOOD!
I JUST BARELY STARTED!
HUH? WHY!?
WHY WOULD YOU GET SO INTO THIS, OF ALL THINGS?
DAAAH !!
...GAVE IT A TRY!
REGULATION SIZE
MOM... WHY DID YOU GIVE ME THIS BODY...?
AREN'T YOU JUST FAT? THAT ISN'T YOUR PARENTS' GENES OR ANYTHING ...
THERE'S NO WAY YOU COULD DO THIS, EVEN FROM THE START! (LOL)
REGULATION SIZE
10cm
YOU'RE CLEARLY OVER THE LINE!

Art Staff
Suri ♀: Chief Assistant
0-Second ♂: Background Art
Taurus ♀: Background Art

Military Advisor
Lee Hyun Seok (warmania)
Oh Se Chan

Special Thanks
Shingo Takano

Crossover Planning
JESUS——Sajin Kouro, Yami no Aegis, Akatsuki no Aegis
Written by Kyouichi Nanatsuki, Art by Yoshihide Fujiwara (Shogakukan)

Design Assistance
Hitoshi Fukuchi

Translation Notes

Common Honorifics
no honorific: Indicates familiarity or closeness; if used without permission or reason, addressing someone in this manner would constitute an insult.
***-san*:** The Japanese equivalent of Mr./Mrs./Miss. If a situation calls for politeness, this is the fail-safe honorific.
***-sama*:** Conveys great respect; may also indicate that the social status of the speaker is lower than that of the addressee.
***-kun*:** Used most often when referring to boys, this indicates affection or familiarity. Occasionally used by older men among their peers, but it may also be used by anyone referring to a person of lower standing.
***-chan*:** An affectionate honorific indicating familiarity used mostly in reference to girls; also used in reference to cute persons or animals of either gender.
***-senpai*:** A suffix used to address upperclassmen or more experienced coworkers.
***-sensei*:** A respectful term for teachers, artists, or high-level professionals.

Yen conversion: While exchange rates fluctuate daily, a convenient conversion estimation is about ¥100 to 1 USD.

Page 40
Mobility Denial System: An actual nonlethal substance developed for the American military that can be sprayed on any surface to reduce friction to near nothing, making the surface extremely slippery. This is intended to help control the mobility of human or vehicle targets.

Page 131
Iai: A school of Japanese swordsmanship that involves drawing the blade from its sheath as an integral part of the attack, rather than a separate action that occurs before combat can commence. The study and practice of this form is known as "iaido" or "iaijutsu."

Page 323
Ganryu: The personal sword school developed by Sasaki Kojiro, the legendary rival of Miyamoto Musashi. Sasaki was a master of the nodachi, or long battle katana, which he used in his fatal duel with Musashi at the island Ganryujima.

UNTIL DEATH DO US PART 9

HIROSHI TAKASHIGE
DOUBLE-S

Translation: Stephen Paul
Lettering: AndWorld Design

This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events, locales, or persons, living or dead, is coincidental.

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